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February. 1862.*

SERMONS

BY

THOMAS THELUSSON CARTER, M.A.,

RECTOR OF CLEWER, BERKS.

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TO
HIS PARENTS,
WHO, PRESERVED FAR BEYOND "THE DAYS OF OUR AGE,"
WITH UNDIMINISHED FACULTIES AND THE UNTIRING SOLICITUDE OF
EARLY LOVE
CEASE NOT TO GUIDE AND SUCCOUR
THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN,
IN HUMBLE THANKFULNESS TO ALMIGHTY GOD
FOR THE MANY BLESSINGS THUS UNUSUALLY PROLONGED,

This Volume
IS DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

NOTICE.

A FEW of the following Sermons have been already published separately. They are now reprinted with some corrections.

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SERMON I.

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

EZEKIEL XVIII. 4.

“BEHOLD, ALL SOULS ARE MINE.”

THE sense of the value of the soul is one main spring of spiritual effort, whether in works of mercy, or in the training of one's own personal life. While beholding the moving mass of men intent on merely filling up the many details of their worldly callings, we are apt to lose the thought of the greatness of man's being; but it is not so with those who design great works, who form a mission, or raise a Church. Such persons have looked through the outward surface, and have pondered the amazing thought of the redeemed humanity of the individual souls which compose the crowd, and throng our streets. So likewise in regard to our personal life, we may forget in the excitement of society, or the pressure of duty, what we were created to be, the origin, the capacities and the purposes of our being; but when in secret communion with GOD we resolve to devote ourselves to Him, this forgetfulness, or indistinctness of view passes away before the apprehension of our real being seen as in His sight. The thought of this awful mystery is one moving cause

of all such resolves, and the momentous truth opens more and more before our eyes, as we advance in the perception of spiritual things.

Let us note some of the elements which constitute the soul's priceless worth.

I. When GOD says, "All souls are Mine," there is in the term, "Mine," a peculiar force, inapplicable in a similar degree to any other created existence on earth. The same expression is used of the earth, "All the earth is Mine;"¹ but it is applied in a different sense. There was a oneness with GOD in the creation of man, shared by no other of the creatures of the earth. "The LORD GOD breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,"² an efflux of His own Divinity, "and man became a living soul;" not meaning that the soul then first became alive, which were to ascribe to Holy Scripture a mere tautology, but that the soul became possessed of another life added to its own, a life that came out from GOD, and passed into the soul, a Divine Indwelling. GOD then made Himself, as it were, a very part of the soul, not merely being its origin, and its end, but He associated Himself with it in some great mystery, and became the Soul of man's soul, the Life of his life. This was our original righteousness, and when this was lost, man lived on with a void, which GOD returning alone could fill. In Baptism, this same Divine Presence is breathed in again, as at the beginning, and GOD again becomes a central Life within the soul. "As GOD has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their GOD, and they shall be My people."³

¹ Exod. xix. 5.

² Gen. ii. 9.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

GOD thus places Himself by His indwelling in such a relation to the souls of His elect, that the parting with a lost soul becomes the occasion of some profound mysterious sadness to GOD Himself. He has lived in it. He had purposed to live in it for ever. He made it for this end. We know how place, and ties of intercourse, even with inanimate things, bind themselves about us, and become part of us, and pain accompanies the parting. These feelings may be types of the Invisible, and have some corresponding sensations in the mind of GOD : for how otherwise can we understand the sense of personal sorrow, which moved the Spirit of GOD in the Prophet Hosea thus to speak : "How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Zeboim ? How shall I set thee as Admah ? Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together."¹ The movement pervading the Divine Nature at the possible loss, bespeaks a close, intimate relationship, a nearness of union, specially distinguishing man ; even the sin of the favoured creature hardly rending the bond of love that united him to GOD.

II. The soul possesses the awful attribute of immortality ; it is infinite in its duration. The sense of infiniteness is in itself overwhelming. When we multiply numbers in an advancing series, approaching as we suppose gradually to an idea of infiniteness, the mind sinks back in the effort to embrace even the faintest approximation to it. The mind is incapable of conceiving infinite time or space,

¹ Hosea xi. 8.

and is burdened even by the vague shadowy idea that imagination attempts to picture. When it is not in reference to space or time, but to the breathing, thinking soul, we may well shrink back with amazement and fear from the contemplation.

It is no doubt because of the appalling weight of the idea of infiniteness in the soul's duration, that some, contrary to all Catholic teaching, reject the doctrine of eternal punishment. They recoil from the thought of infinite duration, when applied to the torment of a sensitive soul. It is not meant that the immortality of the soul is inherent as by nature. If God withheld His hand, even for a moment, the soul would instantly dissolve into the vast void out of which it was taken. Most marvellous is the unchangeable law, which determines the soul's immortality. The soul might die, as the body dies; but it will not die. Practically the soul is as immortal, as God is immortal. Its line of life runs on, as the line of the life of God. It has a beginning, and so is unlike God; but, like God, it has no end. The unchangeableness of the soul's destiny is manifested in the fact, that man, even though he fell, was not cut off; nor even although the whole race became corrupt, was it quenched in the womb of the first parent. Man lived on, multiplying himself inexhaustibly, though still ever in rebellion, ever aggravating his first transgression. The alternative chosen, after the fall, was not to substitute a new and better race in man's stead; but rather to substitute God Himself as one of his race, though at the stupendous cost of bearing the utmost penalty of the transgression. Such was the counsel of God. He chose to humble Himself,

“emptying Himself”¹ of His eternal Glory, as far as it was possible, rather than that man should be annihilated.

It were presumptuous to determine the reasons which guided the mind of GOD in this momentous choice, so full of most gracious forbearance towards mankind. But one circumstance in the constitution of man has reference in a peculiar manner to the Incarnation. The human nature is the singular instance of a being in whom the material and the spiritual worlds unite. Man is the meeting-place of the two worlds. The life of the flesh and the life of the spirit find in him, and, as far as is revealed to us, in him alone, the ground-work of a common fellowship and communion. Our nature, therefore, may have been the ordained condition of that union of the flesh and the spirit which was to be perfected in CHRIST. The one had not been, if the other had not been. Had humanity not remained in being, GOD had not taken the flesh.

What untold, inconceivable mysteries may lie in the predestination of GOD, in connection with this ineffable dispensation of grace, affecting, not our race alone, but all created life! The immortality of man may hereafter be seen to be the means of the fulfilment of the purpose of GOD, according to which “it pleased the FATHER that in Him (JESUS CHRIST) should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him” “in the body of His flesh,” “to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things

¹ “He made Himself of no reputation.” Lit. as in the text. *Exinanivit semetipsum.* Vulg. ἐξέκενῶσεν ἐαυτόν. Phil. ii. 7.

in heaven.”¹ Our LORD’s life in the flesh of man thus concerned even the highest creatures and the unity of all created intelligences in their several degrees of bliss.

We cannot, therefore, estimate too highly the value that God has set on the being of man in his relation to the entire scheme of creation. Momentous consequences, far beyond man’s own happiness, are involved in “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in CHRIST, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him,” in man’s nature, “at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”²

There are reasons for believing that the design of the Incarnation preceded the fall, preceded even the creation of man. The mode in which the first mention of “the seed of the woman”³ occurs, implies it to have been a truth already known to the world, not one then freshly introduced. The object of the prophecy seems to be the new destiny of suffering, that awaited the “woman’s seed;” that He should bruise the serpent’s head, and be Himself bruised. The future coming of “the woman’s seed” seems presupposed. The preservation, therefore, of man, and after the fall his redemption, were involved in some yet higher law of being; in the

¹ Col. i. 19, 20, 23.

² Eph. i. 19, 23.

³ Gen. iii. 15.

transcendent purpose which willed to assume a created nature into the Divine, as the means of exaltation and full consummation of bliss to all the creatures.

III. There are in the soul capacities which seem as inexhaustible as its duration of existence. They are in this present life undeveloped. Beside the palsyng blight of sin, the shortness of time, defects of physical structure, ill health, imperfections of early training, the trammels of a world out of harmony with our true nature, the innumerable necessities of our lower elements depressing the mind, and such like causes of error or infirmity,—are perpetual hindrances to the free progress of the soul and spirit. Yet even now, in a state thus hampered and imperfect, we see, in various individuals of our race, marvellous powers of intelligence and moral greatness, expanding in manifold spheres of life. And even those who seem endued with comparatively feeble powers, are yet conscious of boundless visions, imaginations of what they might become in circumstances more favourable to the development of capacities now dormant within. Such inward feelings must have some end; for nothing has been created in vain. Such dreams are probably dark anticipations of a nobler life, destined to be hereafter expanded to its utmost greatness in a more congenial atmosphere. The early dreams of youth often embody themselves in after life in actual realities; and in like manner the spiritual imaginations of the soul may be the ideal pictures of what will hereafter be realised, of love, or beatitude, or power, or beauty, in worlds where all

energies of life attain their perfect fulness in God.

Again, as we see that the law of perpetual advance marks man's course on earth, so we cannot suppose the soul's life to stay fixed after death at one point; but that the same law of perpetual advance obtains still, and is to be fulfilled in developing its exhaustless capabilities in the world to come. S. Paul, speaking of the contrast between the knowledge then possessed by the disciples of the faith of the Apostles, with what they would inherit hereafter, says, "Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known."¹ It were not difficult to show, from the Scriptures, that the advance which here the Apostle ascribes to the one gift of knowledge, has its parallel in all the human faculties.

One of the most awful revelations of Scripture touches upon this truth—the momentous assertion that our tendencies, whether for good or for evil, continue after death to advance onward more and more towards the full realisation of their possible attainment; a truth of the utmost terror to the lost, but of profoundest joy to them that are saved. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."² These words mark a perpetual progression in the state in which man's

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12.

² Rev. xxii. 11.

probation here is closed ; whether it be a progression of evil, if he have failed in his probation, or a progression of virtue and bliss, if through God's mercy he have been faithful.

IV. Again, to enter into the mystery of a soul, it is necessary to consider its special vocation. A special vocation is that which distinguishes one soul from another. God does not look upon us merely in the mass, as a multitude. He looks at the individual. As we are born, and as we die, singly and alone, so we shall stand before His Judgment-throne, each a single, individual being. So now each soul lives on, separately from every other soul before God. It cannot be true that the hairs of our head are all numbered, and yet not true also that each living soul is a distinct object of apprehension to the Divine Mind. It cannot be true that not a sparrow shall fall to the ground without our FATHER, and not also true that every soul of man is separately viewed, and separately directed in its course by God. In this distinguishing predestination the powers and form of each individual soul, its course of service, its place of usefulness, its intended measure of sanctity, and consequent degree of glory, are all fore-ordained by God.

Each separate soul is distinguishable from all other souls, no one being in all things precisely like to another. Each one is the embodying of a distinct idea of the mind of God. Each one is ordained to accomplish some one distinct purpose of God. This is the soul's vocation. God left unnumbered multitudes of creatures whose existence was possible. He left them to remain in their nothingness.

They might have served Him far better than oneself, or than multitudes that are teeming around us. But there was something which determined GOD to form the souls He formed; to form one, and not another. This it is which GOD loves; not the whole mass, but the individual. Love has no meaning when applied to abstract ideas of multitudes; it is "He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."¹ It is towards individual persons that love is stirred. Divine love, like human love, centres on individual forms, and embraces distinct objects. It is not merely the general nature of man that GOD loves, but it is the special form that nature takes; that which makes each one to be what he is, distinct from every other. The individuality of the separate members of the Body of CHRIST is not inconsistent with the unity of the entire Body, "the perfect man," which alone is the fulfilment of the complete Idea, in which the mind of GOD had delight, when He willed to create Humanity.

And as there is a separate work for each soul to do, so there is a distinct form of spiritual beauty which he is capable of attaining, and a distinct end which GOD willed to attain through him. The mind of GOD has brooded on this idea, contemplating it from the beginning; and His delight in this idea led Him to create the person in whom He willed that it should be embodied, that by grace enshrined in him, it might exist in His Presence for ever. In each one that is lost, this attainment of GOD's mercy fails; in each that is saved, His predestinating love finds its resting-place.

It is this distinct personality that gives their dignity to individual men. Their special dignity is

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

not that they share the common human nature, nor even merely that they share in this nature in CHRIST the same flesh in which He is seated on the Eternal Throne. The special dignity of each individual redeemed man is, that he, sharing this nature which is united to GOD, has in it a form of life peculiar to himself, something that no other being has; that he has to do for GOD what no one else is so called to do, or perhaps is so able to do; that he can exhibit in himself a character of grace, and fill a place, a sphere of glory, which no one but he himself is called to occupy, or perhaps can in all respects occupy as GOD purposed. From this fact of distinct individual existence flow all duties and responsibilities, all relations and claims of service, in the momentous issues of life. They are, if fulfilled, the accomplishment of our special calling of GOD; if neglected, they are the measure of our utter loss and eternal condemnation.

V. It is the property of every individual soul to comprehend more or less clearly the fact of its own responsibility, and to contemplate the end of its existence. It can form for itself the idea of its end, and shape its course in order to its attainment. We have thus far committed to us the momentous power of shaping our own destiny. Our nature, by the law which rules it, ever tends to be what we set before us as an end. The faculties of the soul take the form of the idea which is ever presented to it. There is in many a tendency to be always dreaming irrespectively of the will of GOD and their law of duty; to make themselves heroes or heroines; to form pictures of their own greatness. Their minds take the impressions of this ideal; for

thoughts and imaginations are the texture of the soul, and determine its form. This habit of castle-building is not merely idle; it is the abuse of a mighty power given to us in order to raise the soul, through faith and the grace of God, to the contemplation of unseen verities, to apprehend visions of actual truth concerning the perfect end which the soul is destined to attain. The imagination is given to embody and pourtray in vivid colours on the soul ideas which are above it, but which, by their influence and attractiveness, are intended to raise it to their own level, and assimilate it to their own nature. The secret attractions of a true ideal glory, exercising their constant influence, gradually form and sustain the souls of the elect in communion with God. His elect are not what they outwardly seem to be. It is not the circle of our social duties, not our mechanical labours, nor our intellectual pursuits, which make us to be what we really are. One man is much like another in these respects. These are an economy for a time, suited to our earthly state; they will pass away. What our real life is, depends on the conditions, the aims, the determinations of the will; on the abiding thoughts and growing visions; on the practised discipline, tempers, and affections of the world within, which the outer world knows not of. Each dwells in a sphere of his own, revolving in his own orbit, which is beyond our earthly vision, as the real heavens are within the blue air, which is the limit of our eyesight. And all these elements of the inner world of life will in great measure depend, as to their character and their intensity, on the apprehension which the soul has attained, through

grace, of its own true dignity, its origin and purpose, its calling and its end.

The sense of spiritual greatness, as a high standard before the soul, does not nourish pride. It is rather the truest teacher of humility, because of the perpetual contrast it exhibits between what we ought to be and may become, and what we are.

Contemplate, then, the soul's being in the greatness of its predestined purpose in the mind of God ; the being of each one soul as the expression of one chosen form of this greatness. Let it be an abiding, a deepening conviction. It will be scarcely possible to sin wilfully while the vision lasts. As we behold in faith, grace diffuses its influence instinctively, as it were, through all the faculties of the soul, giving them a direction and a force bending them to the same end. The effort will not be in vain. We shall become at last what we have here ever aimed and tended to become. We shall at last be, what we have fondly imagined. Yea, rather, the realisation will be immeasurably beyond the utmost reach of our conception ; "for," as it is written, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."¹ We shall have become more than our dream of love ; we shall have surpassed our utmost visions of angelic beauty ; we shall have put on a fulness, a radiance of supernatural glory, beyond all thought, for we shall be looking upon God, and "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."²

The contemplation of such views of human life

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

² 1 S. John iii. 2.

tells with a gracious influence on the whole character. It fosters recollectedness, deliberation, reverence. It tends to produce earnestness and holy zeal. It quickens the longing for purity, and deepens contrition. It helps to sustain devotion, and high aims, and the desire of perfection. It acts even upon the least expression of our outward conduct. We are so constituted, that every act and word is affected by our habitual thoughts, and betrays the secret disposition of the soul. There is a significance in every passing feature, or heedless movement; for all outward expressions are the result of the complex workings of the inner life. They express character. It is therefore that such minute precepts are given in Holy Scripture, showing how the most trifling acts may exhibit the highest aims of a spiritual life. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of GOD."¹ "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving thanks to GOD and the FATHER by Him."² Such precepts assume at once the possibility of an entire consecration of our whole being, leavening all our acts by the highest aim through grace, and also the greatness of humanity which is thus rendered capable of offering in all things an acceptable service unto GOD. Let us, therefore, bearing in mind "our high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS," and remembering the great account which we must one day give of the trust committed to us, strive to accomplish the eternal will which has "predestinated us to be conformed to the Image of His dear SON," that we "receive not the grace of GOD in vain."

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

² Col. iii. 17.

SERMON II.

THE NEW CREATION.

S. JOHN III. 6.

“THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT, IS SPIRIT.”

THESE brief words reveal the mystery of our new, our supernatural creation, as the words with which they are contrasted, “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh,” express the mystery of our first, our natural creation. Our LORD contrasts the two as being both alike verified in us. The one is as real, and as substantial as the other. As we are creatures of a fleshly race, by reason of a natural creation derived through natural means from earthly sources, so are we creatures of a supernatural race, by means of a spiritual creation derived through miraculous means from heavenly sources. The two facts in our existence correspond. Thus the redeemed are the subjects of a twofold act of creation. The mystery of their life is not a single but a complex mystery. When David says, “I will give thanks unto Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well;” he is speaking of one, the lowest portion of the mystery—the natural life. This embraced the view of human nature, as it then was, of which

our LORD also speaks, when He says; "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh." The text speaks of the other, the higher portion of the mystery, the supernatural life, which has been superadded as a gracious endowment, a fruit of the Incarnation and Atonement of our LORD, which we have only as being in Him, and which may be lost, if we abide not in Him. The text speaks first of the Author of this new Creation, "the Spirit" of Whom we are born; and next of the result, "the spirit" of the newborn man.

I. Let us first consider the nature of the Spirit Who thus re-creates us. He is not simply the Spirit of GOD, as He once was. He is the Spirit of CHRIST, of GOD Incarnate; i.e., of the combined natures of GOD and Man; for these together constitute the Person of CHRIST. The Spirit of GOD had already proceeded from the SON, as from the FATHER; and, therefore, of the Being of the Godhead He could receive no more. But He was not thus the Spirit of CHRIST. He had before received of the SON, what the SON had received of the FATHER, but not what He had assumed, as Man. But our LORD, speaking of the Spirit, said; "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."¹ He was to receive a new, a superadded communication from the SON, through union with His sacred Humanity.

The HOLY GHOST is the Spirit of the Son of Man, as He was before the Spirit of the Son of GOD. A change has therefore passed over the Being of the HOLY SPIRIT, resembling, though not identical with, the change which has passed over the SON of

¹ S. John xvi. 14.

GOD. The Spirit is not Incarnate, as the SON alone is; but He is associated with Him Who is Incarnate. He is become a partaker in the experiences of the Humanity of our Blessed SAVIOUR, and has thus a personal and perpetual sympathy with our nature.

This coming forth of the HOLY GHOST through CHRIST was a new dispensation of the Spirit. He had before visited man and endowed him with manifold gifts. He had striven with man before the Flood. He had been the life of the true Israelite. He had been present even among the heathen beyond the circle of the chosen people. But there was a form of life in which He had not as yet been given. "The HOLY GHOST was not yet given, for JESUS was not yet glorified."¹ The perfectness of the Incarnation, through the exaltation of the Manhood at the right hand of the FATHER, was the commencement of the new dispensation of the Spirit. It was new, because then the HOLY SPIRIT began to make His abode in the Church, as an organized living body, gathered into one mystical communion in CHRIST; not as before, as the endowment of individual souls specially distinguished from their fellows. It was new in the increased measure and fulness of the gift. But more especially it was new because of the new relation of the Blessed Spirit to man, through His union with our LORD's sacred Humanity. He had rested on CHRIST, on His glorified Manhood; and He came forth to rest on the elect, to impart to them the perfected life of man, renewed and exalted in GOD.

¹ S. John vii. 39.

II. This new dispensation of the Spirit was a gracious renewal of the original creation of man, with the superadded glory of union with CHRIST, and a further advancement of our nature through the participation of His perfected Humanity. Man was originally created "in the Image of God," and, "God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life,"¹ he became possessed of a supernatural gift of life, raising him above himself. The fall involved the loss of this preternatural endowment. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you."² Could that higher, purer element of our being, which had been derived from immediate communication with God, live in man when this separation had taken place? When Adam begat a son, it was not, as Adam himself had been created, "in the image of God," but, "in his own likeness, after his image."³ The language of Scripture marks the essential loss that had ensued; the loss of original righteousness through the loss of the supernatural gift of Divine life. Man is consequently described throughout the Old Testament as a being incapable of understanding God, or obeying a spiritual law; capable only of carnal ordinances and a worldly dispensation; needing to be kept under bondage, as the only remedy against continual sin; as a creature whose thoughts perish in the grave, who could not see God and live; to whom the future was a dark and sorrowful blank.

But how changed the view of man's nature in the New Testament! There all breathes immortal life.

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

² Isaiah lix. 2.

³ Gen. v. 3, as contrasted with ver. 1.

There the state of man is a state of power, of grace, of conquest over sin; a state instinct with divine aspirations, capable of high communion with the invisible world, conformed to the law of God, spiritual, holy, divine. Man is there described as walking in the light of the eternal day, the child of the day, already risen with CHRIST and living in the things that are above; already one with God. The language of Holy Scripture again marks the difference, for it shows that the component elements of man's nature have undergone an essential change. The higher element, the spirit, has re-appeared. The threefold mystery of humanity pervades the Apostolic Scriptures, as the renewed nature now in union with our Divine LORD. "I pray God," says S. Paul, "that your whole body, and soul, and spirit may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."¹ He speaks of the "Word of God," as "quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."² Again, he describes the Divine and the human reconciled and working together in our nature; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."³ Thus again he reveals the distinctions which now first arise among men, grounded on this threefold nature. The "carnal" man is distinguished from the "natural" man, the term "natural" meaning here 'soul-like;' and again, the "natural," or soul-like man is distinguished from the "spiritual" man.⁴ The dis-

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.² Heb. iv. 12.³ Rom. viii. 16.⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 14, "the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος, man of the soul," distinguished from πνευματικὸς, "the man of the spirit," v. 15; and both from σαρκικὸς, "the man of the flesh," iii. 3.

tinctive terms express the differences of character according to the element which preponderates. The "carnal" man is the one in whom the fleshly or lowest elements, the senses and appetites, of our nature preponderate. The "natural," or soul-like man is the one in whom the soul's natural faculties, the imagination, the reason, the intellect, preponderate. The "spiritual" man is the one in whom the higher element, derived from the indwelling Presence of the HOLY GHOST, holds a controlling influence over both the soul and the body, infusing into them Its own power and sanctity, as the ruling principle alike of the inner and outer life. It is this latter condition of humanity alone that possesses a true life. The "carnal" man, he "that is in the flesh, cannot please God."¹ "The carnal mind is enmity against God."² "To be carnally minded is death."³ So again, of the "natural," or soul-like man, it is written, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned."⁴ Of the spiritual man alone it is said; "To be spiritually minded is life and peace."⁵

III. It is the result of this threefold life that our renewed nature touches alike the highest and the lowest worlds. Through the body we touch the lowest worlds, holding communion through the appetites and senses with matter in its manifold forms. Through the mind we touch the worlds of science, the orders of intellectual essences, the

¹ Rom. viii. 8.

² Rom. viii. 7.

³ Rom. viii. 6.

⁴ 1 Cor. viii. 14.

⁵ Rom. viii. 6.

spheres of moral being in which the laws of reason rule. By the spirit we hold communion with the "principalities and powers in heavenly places," with eternal Truth, with the pure light of Heaven, with the glory that shall be revealed, with the Ever-Living, Ever-Blessed TRINITY. The renewed man touches the things of GOD by the spirit which is given him, as he touches earthly things through the flesh. While the senses of his body thrill with the impressions of the material world, his spirit, instinct with grace, "searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of GOD," and is moved with their secret inspirations. This renewed spirit is the true link which connects his whole being with the world unseen, as the flesh connects him with the world of matter. Through the spirit he holds communion with GOD, and GOD with him. It is the organ of prayer. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, FATHER."¹ It is the medium through which our LORD communicates Himself. "The LORD JESUS CHRIST," says S. Paul, "be with thy spirit;"² and again, "he that is joined to the LORD is one spirit."³ Through the spirit he discerns mysteries. "He that is spiritual, judgeth all things."⁴ Through the spirit his lower faculties are conformed to the will of GOD. "The law of the spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS has made me free from the law of sin and death."⁵ Through the spirit the will of GOD is revealed to the soul. "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things,

¹ Rom. viii. 15.² 2 Tim. iv. 22.³ 1 Cor. vi. 17.⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 15.⁵ Rom. viii. 13.

and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.”¹

The whole practical life takes its form and character, as the one or the other of these component parts of our nature preponderates. There is apparently no limit within the range of the creatures to which man's nature may not attain, for good or for evil. He can adapt himself to the highest or the lowest forms of existence. This is the awful power with which he is gifted. He may fall through his own wilfulness below the brutes that perish, or through grace he may rise to be higher than the angels. His nature may deteriorate, and become a devil; in CHRIST it is exalted to the right Hand of the FATHER. “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”²

The result of following the appetites and lower passions without control is to imbrute the soul; the very soul itself becoming incapable even of intellectual exertion, its thoughts and imaginations filled with visions of carnal delights, which impress a character of sensuality on the whole nature. In like manner the reasonable faculties of the soul may operate without the control of the spirit, seeking to know God and the mystery of the invisible world by the laws of science and the processes of the intellect, as in the rationalist or the materialist. Though the former evil is the grosser, yet both alike separate from God. The one is akin to the animal life, the other to intellectual essences;

¹ 1 S. John ii. 27.

² Gal. vi. 8.

but both alike have failed in the purposes of man's creation. "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," which is the condemnation of such as "live after the flesh," is not more fatal than the judgment which Scripture records against the unsanctified intellect, and the exercise of reason opposed to the inspirations of God. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."²

As the indulgence of the lusts of the flesh, or the pride of intellect, according to the preponderance of the one or the other, determines the character of the soul, gradually leavening the whole being after their nature; even so, by the grace of God, the quickening Spirit, uniting Himself with the soul, and through the soul with the body, infuses throughout His heavenly virtue, and the whole man becomes imbued with spirituality of life. He becomes the subject of spiritual discipline; he views all truth in a spiritual light; he is capable of spiritual acts. The very members of his flesh become "the instruments of righteousness;" his very body is transformed into the "temple of the HOLY GHOST." Even "as the precious ointment upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even upon Aaron's beard, and went down unto the skirts of his clothing;" so the Divine Spirit, of which the precious ointment is the type, creating in us the higher elements of our renewed nature, descends through all the in-

¹ Gal. v. 21.² 1 Cor. i. 20.

ferior faculties, diffusing the character, the mind, the virtues of the Humanity of the SON of GOD into the soul and obedient members of the body. The transformed man thus becomes capable of the highest commands and precepts. “Glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are God’s;”¹ becomes a reality within the reach of human attainment through the grace imparted to the redeemed nature. The mere natural condition of man is past, and he is translated into a higher sphere. As in the mere natural state of a reasonable soul the members of the body and the thoughts of the mind are to be brought into obedience to reason; so in the higher state, the state of grace, the actions and impulses, the thoughts and members, of the natural man are made captive to the spirit, and “brought into obedience to CHRIST.” Imperfect as the transformation is of which our present life, even at its best estate, is capable, yet the seed is sown whose life is in itself, and whose heavenly virtue, ever increasing as the truth is willingly received, waits only the appointed time to be assimilated to the likeness of the SON of GOD; even the least honoured and feeblest members partaking of a supernatural glory. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up JESUS from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up CHRIST from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit which dwelleth in you.”² So certain is the change, that even now, in the eyes of GOD, and therefore in the Book of Life, it is spoken of as already accomplished: “If any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”³

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.² Rom. viii. 11.³ 2 Cor. v. 17.

IV. It is part of the mystery of the spirit that its growth is imperceptible. It combines with our natural faculties, and hides itself beneath their outward forms, as our LORD'S true majesty was hidden in the flesh. It is not necessarily given to us to distinguish between the natural and the supernatural life within us, and to say with certainty what is due to the one, what to the other,—so marvellously does the SPIRIT of GOD adapt His inspirations to the individual character, even to the bodily temperament. We are liable to two errors. We may attribute to the direct agency of the Blessed SPIRIT what arises from mere natural causes, and so encourage an idea of our spirituality which has no real ground. Or we may disbelieve His Presence and operations within us, attributing all to the mere improvement of nature, and so lose all sense of an inward communion with GOD, and of our perpetual dependance on His grace. "The discerning of spirits" does not necessarily accompany the gift of the SPIRIT, though it grows with the use of the gift, as the "senses are exercised to discern between good and evil,"¹ in those who are faithful to the light of conscience. Nor is it necessary thus to discern, in order to live the life of the SPIRIT. To seek too anxiously for it is even dangerous. It would mar the growth of a plant to be ever digging around its roots, in order to ascertain the sources of its life. The discernment of the movements of life does not of itself further the life; it may perhaps prove to be a hindrance. We might suffer more from self-consciousness; and this is already one of the greatest hindrances to a life of pure faith. It may need a high degree of sanctity

¹ Heb. v. 14.

to discern, without injury, the movements of GOD within our souls.

But, without such consciousness, we may be sure of the growth of the SPIRIT within us, if we only use aright the ordained means of His increase. "The gifts and callings of GOD are without repentance." We know the track along which the Divine SPIRIT moves, though His mysterious Form escapes our mortal sight. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."¹ But He is surely there, wherever He has promised to make His abode. He surely giveth His increase according to His own prescribed order. So unchangeable are the promises of GOD, that if we follow the appointed modes of His operations, we may be as sure of our increase in grace, as though we could measure His Presence by sight or touch. While we preserve His own appointments, we may commit our onward progress blindly in perfect trust to GOD.

The two essential means or pledges of such increase may here be briefly noted.

1. The special promise of the SPIRIT is given to the use of Sacraments: they are the chosen media of the life of the Spirit. As its first fulness is shed within us in Baptism, and its sevenfold energy in Confirmation, so its constant increase is the grace of the Holy Eucharist. The Church teaches that GOD "has given His SON not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy Sacrament;"² not thereby meaning that the

¹ S. John iii. 8.

² First Exhortation, Communion Service.

mind, apprehending or realising CHRIST through the help of the outward symbols is fed by the bare remembrance of Him ; but that CHRIST through His SPIRIT, according to the laws of spirit, enters into us, and assimilates us to His nature, feeding us with ever-increasing life, even the same life with Himself. He is our "spiritual food," because He imparts Himself and unites Himself with us according to supernatural or spiritual laws of being. Mysteriously present with the visible elements of the Holy Eucharist, through them, as consecrated media, He imparts His spiritual Body and Blood. We receive Him by faith into our spirit, and thence He spreads His gracious Presence throughout all our natural faculties ; not dwelling in any separate part of us, but in us as a whole ; "He dwelleth in us and we in Him." So that we hope to win even for our bodies, thus fed and transformed, a blessed immortality.¹ Therefore frequent Communion is the increase of the spiritual life : not that the increase necessarily depends on the frequency of communion ; for the working of the gift of God is according to the fitness of the soul, and its faithful correspondence with His grace. But the promise is, that they who "hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled ;" and hunger and thirst desire frequent food. The grace of the Blessed Sacrament is not merely an influence, stirring our souls to higher attainments ; it is our LORD's very Self, transforming "the image of the earthly" into "the image of the heavenly," "the natural into the spiritual," till the new creation is perfected in His likeness.

¹ Homily on "Common Prayer and Sacraments."

2. The grace of Sacraments applies alike to all ; they have a general effect, each one receiving his portion according to the full measure of the gift of God. But there is beside this general gift a special individual communion of grace, through which God sanctifies individual souls. He guides each one in the course best suited for his perfection ; adapts his trials to the individual state ; inspires efforts, resolutions, aspirations ; speaks inwardly, calling now to one, now to another path of sacrifice ; disciplines by special humiliations ; reveals precept after precept, interior lights of truth, or special convictions of duty, or aims of higher devotion,—and thus draws on His elect more and more nearly to Himself, the soul's only true end. This is the secret of special vocations, and different and distinct degrees and orders of service. Blessed are they who understand the voice that leads them on, and follow it. These are the sheep who know the voice of the Good Shepherd, whom He leads in and out, and He goeth before them, and they find pasture. The voice seems strange at first, as it was to Samuel, when at the dead of night it first broke on his startled ear. But as they listen, they gain the practised sense which, even in the din of this world's tempest, discerns the “still small voice,” and recognises the indwelling God. They more and more understand the meaning of the voice which draws them on, and follow Him Who calls them “whithersoever He goeth.” Made “willing in the day of His power,” they “go on from strength to strength ;” for “the fruit of the SPIRIT is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth.” Every prayer has its own special increase ;

for “shall not your heavenly FATHER give His HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask Him?”¹ As the grace of sacraments gives a general character and sacredness to the spiritual life, so this secret individual guidance impresses on it its special form and feature, adding grace to grace. Thus the life becomes a whole; the intervals of sacramental Communion being filled up with the illuminations of an unceasing Presence, an abiding “Light which shineth more and more unto the perfect Day.”

Day by day the redeemed are thus led onward to the final consummation of bliss. It is now the time of preparation, but the end hasteneth on; “our salvation is nearer than when we believed.” The power of the SPIRIT, more and more, draws within its influence mind, and heart, and all the energies of the reasonable soul, in some degree purifying and renewing the very body itself, and will hereafter so pervade the body and its members, that the very flesh shall assume the attributes of spirit, and our whole humanity be transformed, even as our LORD’s Humanity is glorified. “There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial.”²

A perfect unity of life, one with itself, one with all saints, with all the hosts of the blessed, one with GOD in CHRIST, will be the everlasting witness of the truth of the “assurance of the faith,” which “against hope believed in hope,” and “fainted not, neither was wearied.” “I know in Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.”³

¹ S. Luke xi. 13.

² 1 Cor. xv. 40.

³ 2 Tim. i. 12.

NOTE.

It is uncertain whether the "spirit" of the renewed man is to be regarded as a distinct element superadded to the soul, or merely the soul itself illuminated and transformed by grace. Dr. Moberly, in a valuable sermon lately published, has thus expressed his views on this question: "The first great and natural division which the sacred writers make, is that of body and soul—the material and the immaterial parts of man; and this is regarded as an exhaustive division, as it really is, admitting of no third part. The parts of it are really separable: they will be separated in death, and reunited in the resurrection." "But the immaterial part, the soul, is occasionally, so to speak, subdivided; not, of course, technically, nor yet so as to signify that these parts are physically separable; but logically only, whensoever, as in a multitude of very important passages, the soul is contra-distinguished from the spirit. When then this subdivision takes place, the soul, specifically so-called, is to be understood to comprehend all those lower parts of the immaterial man which are more immediately connected with the body, 'that assemblage of feelings, movements, and impulses, of which the heart is the imaginary tabernacle;' while by the spirit are meant all those higher and more spiritual portions of the immaterial nature of man, wherein he addresses God with heavenly affections, which is 'the medium of our cognizance of the Divine, that portion of us which stands in most intimate association with the HOLY SPIRIT;' which is capable of receiving directly the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, and communicating those influences downwards, first to our lower soul, and then to our body, whereby our whole being may be sanctified and illuminated with the holy light of God." (Sermons on the Beatitudes. Serm. I., p. 8. J. H. and J. Parker.) The quotations are from Professor Ellicot.

The author supposes that the distinction between the soul and spirit is systematically made in the New, as contrasted with the Old Testament, as marking a new element, then, and not till then, restored to humanity. Where the term "spirit" is used in the Old Testament, as e.g., in Eccles. xii. 7, "The spirit shall return unto God Who gave it," the term is used as identical with the soul, or immaterial part of man in general, not as distinguished from the soul, as is shown to be the case in the New Testament.

SERMON III.

THE END OF THE REDEEMED.

REV. v. 8—12.

“THE FOUR BEASTS AND FOUR AND TWENTY ELDERS FELL DOWN BEFORE THE LAMB, HAVING EVERY ONE OF THEM HARPS, AND GOLDEN VIALS FULL OF ODOURS, WHICH ARE THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS. AND THEY SANG A NEW SONG, SAYING, THOU ART WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK, AND TO OPEN THE SEALS THEREOF: FOR THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD OUT OF EVERY KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE, AND NATION; AND HAST MADE US UNTO OUR GOD KINGS AND PRIESTS: AND WE SHALL REIGN ON THE EARTH. AND I BEHELD, AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF MANY ANGELS ROUND ABOUT THE THRONE AND THE BEASTS AND THE ELDERS: AND THE NUMBER OF THEM WAS TEN THOUSAND TIMES TEN THOUSAND, AND THOUSANDS OF THOUSANDS: SAYING WITH A LOUD VOICE, WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLOBE, AND BLESSING.”

THE Revelations are a succession of visions, in which the kingdom of the regeneration is represented symbolically, so as to adapt its deep mysteries to human apprehension. Throughout the Book our LORD Himself is the chief object. Around Him all movements circle: on Him all events depend: before Him all adoration arises: but with Him, wherever He is, are the saints. In the dis-

pensations of His Providence, they follow Him: even on His throne they are united with Him. It is not merely that they, like the Angels, are ministers and instruments executing His will; they are a portion of His glory; they are one with Himself.

The text is one of the earliest scenes. The preceding chapter opens with a symbolic representation of God: "I was in the Spirit," saith S. John, "and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone. And there was a rainbow round the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."¹ Afterwards the Human Form of the Eternal Son is seen within the same throne: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain."² Referring to the same throne the vision proceeds: "And round about the throne, were four and twenty seats (or thrones),³ and upon the seats (thrones) four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold." A yet more striking appearance follows: "And *in the midst* of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts (or living creatures) full of eyes before and behind."⁴

The living creatures represent the saints; for the new song which they sing in a later part

¹ Rev. iv. 2.

² Rev. v. 6.

³ Rev. iv. 4. The same word is used to describe the place on which God is represented seated, and on which the saints are seated. *κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου θρόνοι εἴκοσι καὶ τέσσαρες*: "round about the throne were four and twenty thrones."

⁴ Rev. iv. 6.

of the same vision, could arise only from such as have been redeemed from the earth. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy Blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and Priests, and we shall reign on the earth."¹

The meaning of this vision in the Revelations of S. John is more clearly seen, when it is compared with the corresponding symbols under which Ezekiel saw the kingdom of God in glory, as it was revealed to Israel of old. "I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures."² In this vision the Presence of God is symbolised, as in the Revelations; for above the firmament, which was over the heads of the living creatures, was the "likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the appearance of a man above it." Thus far the vision was the same, but it differed in this, that the living creatures who before Ezekiel's eyes moved with the throne, and "went whithersoever the Spirit was to go," were angels; not, as in the Revelations, saints redeemed from the earth. In the Revelations the angels have given way, and another race has taken their place; or there was a space nearer to the Throne unoccupied in the days of Ezekiel, an interval between the angels and God, afterwards to be filled up. The angels are present

¹ Rev. v. 9.

² Ezek. i. 4, 5.

in the Revelations, and are still around the Throne ; but they are removed to a greater distance. They are represented as being joined to the Saints in the same acts of adoration, but in a circle beyond them. “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the Throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”¹ The angels are “round about,” while the saints are “within” the throne. Afterwards is seen another circle of creatures still further off, who take up the same song of adoration ; “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him That sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”²

The vision is a representation of the whole creation adoring and praising God, the creatures being represented in their order of nearness to the Throne, in different ranks circling around, each in his own place, and his ordained relation one to the other. The nearest is redeemed man. He is “within,” as well as “around,” the Throne. The angels succeed. They are around the Throne, and around the saints ; the saints being placed between them and the Throne. The other ranks of creatures are beyond the angels. The order has changed between the times of the Old, and the times of the New Testa-

¹ Rev. v. 11, 12.

² Rev. v. 13.

ment. In the new dispensation humanity has been raised, first in the person of the SON of GOD, uniting humanity with Himself in the very Bosom of Deity; and next, through Him, in the persons of His saints, who, sharing His Nature, share also His nearness to the Godhead. Not only the LORD, ascending to the Eternal Throne, has passed beyond all orders of angels, and entered, in His Human Form, into the very Brightness of the Godhead, but the saints also pass after Him on the same dazzling track of glory, and take their places in the innermost circle within the same Presence, and in some unspeakable Beatitude are made one with CHRIST in the glory of the FATHER, "angels, and principalities, and powers" being beneath and beyond them, subordinate to our LORD in His Human Nature, and, in Him, to all who wear the same nature in its union with Himself.

The vision represents the perfecting of the Incarnation. The Head could not be made perfect without the Body. His life in the flesh would have been a maimed life, unless His members were with Him in the very glory into which He Himself has entered. It was for this He pleaded before His Sacrifice was completed. "FATHER, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."¹ And even more than this; for not merely did He ask that they should "behold His glory," but His will was that they should even share it with Him in a sameness of life. "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have

¹ S. John xvii. 24

given them, that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.”¹

I. This vision is intended, we cannot doubt, to form a ground of hope and encouragement in the progressive advancement of our spiritual life. Our nature is possessed of an instinct ever looking forward to the end of our course, with power to brighten the scenes which imagination pictures. It is the life of hope, and every faculty is stimulated and sustained by its influence. It invests with its fascination our youthful dreams. It operates all our life through, with less ardour, perhaps, but scarcely with less earnestness, in the schemes of after years. Men are quickened by it to the greatest exertions, and to continued self-sacrifice. The hope of the end ever kindles fresh efforts, and even constant failure is unable in many minds to relax the spring of energy, which a succession of imaginary prospects still stimulates.

The Revelations is the one book of Holy Scripture that specially feeds the yearnings of souls who live on the promised inheritance of the redeemed. It is to us what Isaiah and Ezekiel and Daniel were to the Israelites. These Prophets were God’s messengers of hope to gladden the Israelites during their exile, and amidst the dark scenes of their later history. Their visions of the final deliverance and future glory of the elect people, formed “the silver lining” of the cloud which so long oppressed them. The Book of the Revelations occupies a corresponding place in the New Testament. The

¹ S. John xvii. 22, 23.

holy Gospels present the new Life in a state of deep depression, persecuted, despised, tempted on every side, overridden by the powers of the world, with an ever-losing cause, and the triumph apparently resting with its enemies. The Acts of the Apostles record vast spiritual powers exercised by the faithful, their hands and voices instinct with miraculous energy; "the very shadow of Peter passing by" healing the sick; yet the saints are still waging a perpetual warfare against overwhelming forces; their life an unceasing struggle, flight from place to place, reproach, hatred, imprisonment, pain. The Epistles speak of their inward experience and secret sensations; they tell of peace, and joy, and brightness, and sweetness of communion with God, beyond all power of thought. Yet still the Epistles give even a darker view than the Acts, of tribulation and poverty, of the oppression of evil, of failing hopes and weary disappointments, of the frailty even of the faithful, of dissensions even among the few elect.

Suppose the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles to have closed our view of the life of the saints; there would assuredly be the blessed confidence, that as God is love, so He would accomplish His promises, and "wisdom be justified of all her children" in some untold mystery of blessedness reserved in heaven for those who "endure unto the end." But, as far as respects any outward manifestation, the Scriptures of the New Testament would have closed in sorrow, in weakness and tribulation, in shame and contempt. How different the scene which is now left before the eye of faith as the closing vision, the last impression in the Book of

GOD of the mystery of the life of the faithful. We now see them exalted, glorified, exulting, *nearest* of any creature to the Throne of GOD, even within the Throne; a nearness in which no archangel appears; an inner radiance of light and sanctity which in some ineffable communion is one with GOD. What a change, after the chequered, darkened view of the previous earthly course! What a vision of what oneself one day may be, what each is surely destined to be, if he be faithful! What a prospect for the imagination to pourtray! What joy, what support, to feel that every act of true life, every true endurance for GOD, every true breathing of love, even every true desire, are so many lines converging towards the predestined end of our being. When a man is returning home after long wanderings, he anticipates the scene—the old haunts, the faces, the voices of early days; and his heart springs up, and burns within him. The Revelations of S. John were intended by the Blessed SPIRIT to tell us of this far home of faith, and to quicken a similar spring of exulting anticipation; to cause the same glow of hope to thrill within every one who is disciplining himself patiently, in the midst of these earthly trials, waiting for the fulness of the manifestation of CHRIST.

II. These visions, moreover, involve the existence in disembodied souls of active living energies. There are those who tell us, that souls separate from the body pass into an unconscious sleep; that the dead are consequently losers, in comparison with those who remain on earth. Hence the term “poor,” applied to the dead, and the pity expressed

on their behalf. And, indeed, if the Book of God had closed with the Epistles, though there is abundant proof that the "dead in CHRIST" are at rest, and are blessed, waiting for a happy resurrection; yet there would be no sign or voice to tell us of their employments, or their degree of consciousness. But the Revelations picture scenes of earnest life among the dead, while the resurrection of the bodies of the saints is yet to come. They are to be pitied who see in the Revelations only prophecies and symbols of earthly events. Is it possible that the symbolic forms of the Jewish temple should be formed "after the example and shadow of heavenly things,"¹ and the symbols of the New Covenant have no connection with heavenly realities? Are the forms of Christianity less living than those of Israel, which was itself but a shadow? Are the symbols which represent the ministry of angels in the Old Testament to be accepted as true, and those which in the New Testament represent the ministry of the saints, to be explained away as mere poetical imagery?

The saints are represented in the visions of S. John as no less actively employed than the angels who appear in the same visions. Is the one body consciously alive, and not the other also? The saints are there described, as watching the progress of the successive changes of the dispensations of God; grieving at the continued triumph of evil, and oppression of the truth. "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O LORD,

¹ Heb. viii. 5; Exod. xxv. 40.

holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"¹ They rejoice at the accomplishment of the Divine judgments. After the fall of Babylon, S. John "heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia." "And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts," (or living creatures,) "fell down and worshipped God That sat on the Throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia."² The onward progress of the kingdom is the cause of joy to the great company there gathered around the LORD. "I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on Mount Sion, and with Him an hundred and forty-four thousand having His FATHER'S Name written on their foreheads." "And they sang as it were a new song before the Throne, and before the four beasts and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."³ They offer unceasing adoration and praise. "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."⁴ They offer continual intercessions: "The angel at the altar having a golden censer" offered the incense "with the prayers of all saints."⁵

These are the energies of an active and exalted life; they are acts of intensest love, of profound sympathy, of deepest compassion, of fervid adoration, of pure delight. As GOD employs ministries of men on earth to carry out His purposes, so may these ministries of the saints, even in their disembodied state, fulfil high behests in more transcen-

¹ Rev. vi. 10.

² Rev. xix. 1, 4.

³ Rev. xiv. 1, 3.

⁴ Rev. iv. 8.

⁵ Rev. viii. 3.

dent spheres. This may, in part, explain the calling away of many whom we think we can ill spare, leaving us in their full strength and spiritual maturity. They have other service in higher worlds. They are needed where alone more blessed tasks of love can be accomplished.

Can we, moreover, doubt but that souls thus alive continue to pray for those who remain on earth, as they prayed of old? Is it possible that they should grow in the habit of intercessory prayer up to the hour of death, and then cease thus to pray for ever? They cannot altogether forget the scenes of earth, the homes of their fathers, the trials of their mortal state. Can Moses forget the journeyings in the wilderness, or S. John the struggles of the seven Churches, or Mary the home of Bethany, or the Magdalene the garden of the Sepulchre, or S. Stephen the violence of his persecutors, or S. Paul his labours and watchings? Nor surely can their sympathies be extinct for those of the same faith, who now travail through like trials and temptations, any more than one just parted from some fond embrace can forget the trials shared with those who still linger here; the sorrows, whether of the Church, or of the home, or of their inmost hearts, of which he, the loved one who has passed away, knew all the secrets. And surely, now that they are with God, and have prevailed for themselves, their intercessions cannot have less avail than of old. If S. James bid the "sick send for the elders of the Church, that they may pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the LORD," with the promise that "God shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be for-

given him,"¹ may we not believe that the prayers of the twenty-four elders who are before the Throne have power with God?

The very thought of such sympathy and aid may well strengthen every struggling spirit. The belated traveller, who has yet a long journey by night before he reach his home, is gladdened when he sees the clouds of evening clear away and the innumerable stars shine out, feeling their orbs of light to be holy watchers by his way, and has a joy and consolation in their brightness looking down upon his loneliness. So surely is there gladness and fresh courage for one struggling through difficulties and reproaches, or in pain and bereavement, who raises his eyes in faith into the Invisible, and sees one and another, an untold host of blessed beings of his own race, who have known his own trials and experienced his own infirmities, now associated with martyrs and Apostles; and thinks how they have borne, but now rejoice; how they have persevered, but now have begun to receive their recompense; and these all watching for him, interceding for him, longing that he may be with them where they are with God. As he kneels, his solitary prayer ascends with the vast stream, the ceaseless incense of sweet odour rising up from the Angel's hand before the Throne. S. Paul urges us to constancy with such thoughts as these: "Seeing, then, that we have so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith."² Their thoughts must often rest on us, for "without us they cannot be made perfect." Our thoughts

¹ S. James v. 14, 15.

² Heb. xii. 1.

may well turn often towards them, for they are with CHRIST, and see His Face; they have had through grace power with God, and have prevailed.

III. These visions raise us to a higher view of human life. The outward scene around us deceives us. The busy, restless world, its contentions and jealousies, its keenly-sought honours, its gains and luxuries, its proverbial sayings and current opinions, even its best affections and purest instincts, give us a mere earthly view of the purposes and capabilities of human life. They act upon us so forcibly, so constantly, that it costs frequent efforts, even to the most faithful, to clear the mind of the false impressions, which in most persons become as a second nature. A low standard is thus formed, and the mind ever tending to fall short of the standard it assumes, the divine light within is gradually darkened; and the regenerate, the sanctified, they who are indwelt by God and sealed by His Spirit, fall into, if not an ungodly, yet a merely natural and worldly life. The thought of the faithful who are gone before us, is calculated to counteract this fearful downward tendency. Their world of life contrasts with this lower world of life. It is as real, as stirring; it is more joyous, more full of imagination and intellectual energy, of love, of sympathy; more lasting; as it is more true to the higher ends for which we were created. They have entered into it: yet they were of like passions, and subject to the same temptations with ourselves. They have reached this end, because they were ever aiming at it, ever yearning after it; because they looked through the veil of

earthly things, and saw hidden mysteries, and perceived God alone to be the true rest of their redeemed nature. They had learnt that this outward scene is but a period of probation, to be used only as an instrument to higher ends. They did not rest in these things, but took them, or laid them aside, as they were serviceable or not to this, their one absorbing object. They studied to have a single eye, an undivided heart, and to give the energies of their being to things which are not seen, which are eternal. In sorrow, and loneliness, and pain, they endured, as seeing Him Who is Invisible. What, therefore, they have attained,—what they now are,—is not merely a reward because of their faithfulness; it is the legitimate, the necessary development of their true choice. Their vision of God, their ceaseless joy, their abounding love, their ineffable sanctity, their union with our LORD, are the completion of what was begun here. They yearned after it on earth, and now the fond dream is come true. And this their present state is the true aspect of humanity; the only theory of human life which stands the test of time. If the life of our LORD, the only true pattern of the perfected life of man, cause despair, or doubt,—if the possibility of approach, from its very perfectness, paralyse the soul's efforts,—the lives of the saints remove this doubt. They passed through our very trials, with the same weakness; they experienced the same temptations, with the same stubborn nature to subdue. They had similar obstacles to overcome, the same inward fight with the same corrupt tendencies, and the same seeds of evil. Did they live in other times, under different circumstances, and

so their example fail to apply ? But the saints are of all classes, and of all times. There are among them those who may have been with us in the same home, studied at the same school, served the same offices, associated with the same companions, had the very same calls and interruptions. We may have seen them face to face, and passed them by. We may have outshone them in the world, spoken slightly of them in common talk. They may have had infirmities which seemed to us greater than we deemed our own to be. Some have had a far less favourable lot than our own, less powers, less opportunities, less guidance, less outward aid, even less grace given ; but they have attained, for they made their choice well, and with a single eye kept it. They trusted all to GOD, and they have found Him true. We may have many ends, they had one ; we may have divided hearts, they had given all their heart. This unity and consistency distinguished their course ; and as they lived, so they “ died, in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”¹ They are now “ before the Throne of GOD, and serve Him day and night in His Temple, and He that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.”²

The standard of our earthly life rises, as we look on their present existence before GOD. They behold the Beauty of the King, the perfect Humanity which is on the Throne of the FATHER. They are within spheres of light, before which all earthly

¹ Heb. xi. 13.

² Rev. vii. 17.

light, however radiant, pales. They are there in the spirit, without the body, each in his distinct personality; for personality resides in the spirit, not in the body. In that transcendent light the lingering remains of their earthly infirmity are being purged away; in spirit even now they are becoming like unto GOD, as hereafter their bodies, as they rise from the dust, "shall be fashioned after His glorious Body."

Life passes; a few more years, a few more setting suns, the shedding leaves of a few more autumns, a few more grey hairs on our head, perhaps scarce another day, or even another hour, and this earthly coil shall drop off, and the disembodied spirit stand before GOD, waiting for the Resurrection. Shall we then see the same Beatific Vision, and rejoice in it as our endless portion? Oh! that we may at last take our several places in the one Body, long prepared, long waited for, in His predestination of love, in the innermost circle within the Throne, through His grace, Who gave up all, and died, that such beatitude might be ours; to Whom, with the FATHER and the HOLY SPIRIT, be all glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON IV.

THE CROSS THE INSTRUMENT OF CONVERSION.

S. LUKE XXIII. 42, 43.

“AND HE SAID UNTO JESUS, LORD, REMEMBER ME WHEN THOU COMEST INTO THY KINGDOM. AND JESUS SAID UNTO HIM, VERILY I SAY UNTO THEE, TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.”

THERE are in the lives of all who are saved certain turning points, when either for the first time the soul is drawn to GOD, or previous drawings are sensibly deepened. They vary in degree from the gentle quickenings of a life-long piety to the violent revolutions which take place in souls who are as brands plucked out of the burning. Such seasons can never be forgotten; they stand out prominently as landmarks in our course, on which alone the light of heaven seems to be shining, filling up the whole retrospect, and shutting out the intervening experiences of the soul. In all such cases there have been, doubtless, secret preparations of the heart, leading on, and opening the way to these critical seasons. But the eye of the soul rests only on these great points of its history; and they did, in fact, determine its conversion.

Thus, in S. Matthew's case, while his previous

convictions, his gradual weanings from earth, fears, aspirations of self-devotion, are not revealed, the eventful words, "Follow Me,"¹ and the look cast on him as those words were spoken, live in the Church's annals, and must have dwelt in his own memory, as the all-absorbing crisis of his destiny. So in the case of Nathanael: the lightning flash of mingled convictions that opened upon him, as the LORD said to him, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee,"² is the one recorded feature of the picture, though there were doubtless long trains of thought conspiring towards the coming change, and bound up with the incident to which our LORD referred.

Of all such cases, however, the one in which this remark is pre-eminently true, is that of the penitent thief. And this not so much from the extreme suddenness of his conversion at the very last hour of his life, but from the extraordinary circumstances attending it in its intimate connection with the Crucifixion. So amazing is the whole scene, so wrapt into a surpassing mystery of awe, that we are wont to regard this conversion as an event having no parallel with that of other men, and no antecedent links or connection with the penitent's own past history. To suppose this, however, would be inconsistent with the laws regulating man's inner life, and God's dealings with His elect. Moreover, there are circumstances recorded in the history of this conversion which bring it within the range of our experience, and make it capable of general application. His own expressions supply the links between his previous state of mind and the stupen-

¹ S. Matt. ix. 9.

² S. John i. 48.

dous revolution he was destined at last to undergo. The words, "This Man hath done nothing amiss," prove not merely his previous knowledge of our LORD, and his appreciation of His sanctity; but also that he had weighed the charges brought against Him, and was convinced of their falseness. Again, his words, "We indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds," bespeak not merely a readiness to confess his guilt, but also an acknowledgment of the justice of Divine retribution, even in its extremest forms, on the tortured body and soul of the guilty. Again, the words, "LORD, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," intimate, that the transcendent mysteries of which he then spake were not altogether new to him; that before, even in the midst of his transgressions, he had mused on the hopes of Israel, and realised, however dimly, the idea of a King Whose kingdom embraced the unseen world. And again, when he said to his brother malefactor, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" he showed a sense of the nearness and personal agency of God, perhaps of His very Presence in the Man crucified by his side; at least a conviction of the overruling Hand of God as a living agent in the awful scene of which himself formed a part.

These convictions, these visions of unseen things, must have grown out of many conspiring thoughts, taking their rise in the penitent's previous experience. Still, the crisis of his conversion was at the moment when the ineffable light from the Face of the Crucified broke in upon his soul, while gazing on the stupendous vision of One like to himself,

condemned, hated, suffering, dying, yet claiming to be GOD. As he looked, his soul was drawn to embrace the inner mysteries of the Atonement; he recognised the truth when most hidden from the eyes of the disciples; his faith was matured when even Apostles had forsaken and fled; amid humiliation, anguish, and death, he perceived in the mysterious Sufferer the one stay of hope, on Whom to lay the burden of his life in its fearful passage into the Presence of GOD.

The special lesson of this history is, that the Cross of CHRIST is the direct instrument of the conversion of the soul. It exemplifies the meaning of S. Paul, when he speaks of "CHRIST crucified," as "the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD;"¹ or when he summed up the whole Revelation of the Gospel in this one mystery, "I determined to know nothing among you save JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified;"² or again, when he expressed his astonishment at the possibility of error of doctrine in the Galatians, "among whom JESUS CHRIST had been evidently set forth crucified."³

These expressions imply an influence emanating from the Cross, which comprehends the whole mind of GOD. They represent the Crucifixion, not as a part, but as a whole; a revelation in itself; concentrating in its single mystery the fulness of the Divine love, the life of all Creeds, the grace of all Sacraments; not a mere historical fact, but an ever-living reality in the spiritual world, around which all the movements of the new Creation turn, and from which all orders of redeemed humanity

¹ 1 Cor. i. 24.

² 1 Cor. ii. 2.

³ Gal. iii. 1.

draw their supernatural light. As CHRIST in His sacred Person is the express Image of the FATHER, so the Crucifixion is the express Image of the “height, and depth, the length and breadth of the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge.” Through it the soul gazing apprehends all truth, and is gradually “filled with all the fulness of God.”¹

Let us endeavour to realise this mystery in its bearings on the several stages of the spiritual life.

And, first, how does the sight of the Cross work in the soul repentance for past transgression! It presents to the mind a view of the wrath poured out as a consequence of human disobedience. Those ghastly wounds, those cheeks streaming with blood, the hair dabbled on the torn brow, the back gored with the scourge, the drooped head, the emaciated limbs, the Soul in utter abandonment of God, as of one accursed,—give to us a measure by which to test the enormity of sin. Not even the least sin of ours could be pardoned, but at such a cost. Or, if we take our sins one by one, and contrast them with what we there behold, how does our softness and luxury show beside the endurance and self-discipline of the Cross! Or our clinging to self beside its utter annihilation of all human sensitiveness! Or, how do we regard our love of praise, our self-glorying, our jealousies, as we muse upon that scene of humiliation! How does our impatience, our irritability, our quick resentment, bear comparison with the meekness, the patience expressed in every feature of that tortured Form? How does our whole natural mind contrast with

¹ Eph. iii. 19.

His mind, our thoughts with His thoughts, our aims with His purposes, thus revealed? Or again, consider the lesson which the Cross teaches us, when we turn away from sin, as to the truth of our penitence. How does the extremity of mortification which He endured for the sins of others, contrast with the imperfectness of our remorse, the insignificance of our penance, for our own! If such horror of inward desolation was on His Soul at the thought of sin, which He had thus voluntarily taken to bear, how miserably trifling the amount of contrition which we experience for what we ourselves wilfully commit against Him! What have been our acts of humiliation, our marks of regret, at displeasing God; what the reality of our confessions, if we test them by what He felt when the very same sins of ours fell on our LORD!

This, however, is but the first view of the teaching of the Cross in the progress of our conversion; for the condemnation and cleansing away of sin is but the beginning of a restored humanity. The abandoned, the reckless, they who habitually yield to temptation, are the persons most deeply concerned with the sight of the Cross, under this its first aspect. They who have advanced beyond, still view the Cross under the same aspect; but it is only to deepen convictions already worked, and to quicken the consciousness of sin which their renewed will has already renounced. There is a yet deeper mode of viewing CHRIST crucified.

II. Towards the close of the Crucifixion S. John had drawn nearer to the foot of the Cross, and he was viewing it as intently as the Penitent Thief,

but with a deeper insight of its mystery. He is a type of a different order, the forerunner of a vast communion, who standing on an advanced stage of spiritual life are still riveted as at first by the sight of the Cross, but are now learning from it a different lesson. As under the first aspect the Cross teaches the malignity, the enormity of sin, its sure and tremendous consequences; so, under this further aspect, it teaches the life of the illuminated reason, and raises the penitent up to the comprehension of the sanctities of the Divine Nature. The Cross under this view is still the instrument of conversion, but of a conversion of a higher order. It was in allusion to His death, that our LORD used the remarkable words; "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth."¹ He here speaks of the completeness of His sufferings, as the perfecting of His sanctity, and thence having a communicative power to act in imparting sanctity to His elect. This view of the virtue of the Cross was the groundwork of S. Paul's prayer: "that I may know Him, and the fellowship of His Sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."² S. Paul had risen beyond the cleansing of sin, and had realised, as the fruit of the Cross, a conformity to the very mind of the suffering CHRIST. And how vividly, under this most touching form, is the profoundest knowledge of the spiritual life exhibited! The graces which, through the changing scenes of our LORD's previous history, we watch in their several details, as varying circumstances bring them out to view, how are they all concentrated in the Cross, and

¹ S. John xvii. 19.² Phil. iii. 10.

under what keen chastenings, and with even more than ordinary tenderness! Here is love paying its last act of self-sacrifice. Here is lowliness abasing itself to the extremest contempt. Here is patience undisturbed at the consummation of cruelty and malice. Here is mercy pardoning the completed act of rebellion. Here is submission of the will disciplined to its furthest point of compliance. Here too we pass beyond the commandments of righteousness which He gave, to the counsels which likewise He delivered. Here is poverty in its utmost nakedness. Here is mortification in its extremest forms, physical and spiritual alike. Here is perfected obedience to man's will, as well as the will of God. Here is abnegation of self emptied of all its glory. Here every natural affection is offered up in sacrifice.

Moreover these austere graces, when seen in the light of the Cross, how are they freed of all harshness, as they intermingle with the most touching sensibility, with inexhaustible love! For here we see the most tender considerateness for others, more than woman's feeling for another's sorrow, the greatest gentleness of word and tone, associated with the appalling severity of that speechless woe. How are all graces thus combined in harmony, one with another, as converging rays of different hues melt into the perfect light.

As we gaze, these intermingled graces move our being to its inmost depths. The mere contemplation raises us. We feel the pressure of a mould that has life in itself. They lay hold of instincts in our nature, according to which the mind beholding is assimilated to the object beheld. As we gaze upon these characters of a perfected Humanity,

they enthrall and win us by their persuasiveness; awe us by their majesty; convert us into themselves by the grace, which, as through a sacrament, perpetually passes forth from their visible forms; and thus virtue grows within us by the contemplation of its true Type under its most winning forms expressed in the most vivid characters. We not merely see our sin there condemned with a deepened contrition; we see its contrary virtue also set before us; and all the magic power that hangs around the Crucified, invests the virtues of His sacred Person with new motives to win our enthralled hearts to the emulation of His great example. We cannot love Him, without loving the virtues which His dying for us sets forth. We cannot look upon Him thus, and not love. We cannot truly love, and not seek to imitate.

III. There is a yet further mystery, a conversion of a yet higher order vouchsafed to the soul through the sight of the Cross. The cleansing away of sin, and the illumination of a restored nature, through the graces formed in us after the likeness of CHRIST, are not the completeness of our redemption. The full repose of the soul is in union with God, the resting of our nature on His Nature. And this final transformation of redeemed Humanity is intimately associated with the Cross. Our LORD once spake of His Death as the occasion of the developement of His mystical Body, the condition out of which would spring the sharing of a common life, a oneness of being between Himself and the Communion of His Saints. He revealed this truth a few days before His Passion. "The hour is come," He said, speaking through the

Greeks to the Gentile world, "that the Son of Man should be glorified."¹ And then He explained the manner in which His glory should be accomplished, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."² From His own Humanity bruised in death there would grow a new Creation of one nature, one flesh with His own. This again was symbolised by the rending of the Veil of the Temple at the instant of His death. Through the rent Veil was the entrance into the Holy of Holies, and the rent Veil is "His" torn "Flesh."³ His crucified Humanity is the "new and living way which He consecrated for us," through which we enter into the Holiest, and become one with God; and as death ensued, this union was mysteriously signified in His own Person to the outward eye. As the sacred Form of the New Adam slept, His side was opened, and there issued forth the Water and the Blood, that so He might give birth to the new and truer Eve, "the Bride, the LAMB'S Wife," "bone of His Bone, flesh of His Flesh," who was to be to Him, for Whom "it was not good to be alone," a companion meet in the restored Paradise of the new Creation of God. This effusion of His Humanity, finally consecrated in sufferings, was the commencement of the stream which, ever flowing on, draws into itself, and forms after its own life, one after another of His members; the perfect conversion of redeemed humanity into some inconceivably mysterious fellowship and communion with God.

This final beatitude emanates from the Cross. The Cross is the very instrument through which

¹ S. John xii. 23.

² Ibid. xii. 24.

³ Heb. x. 20.

this Divine union is formed, and grows, and is for ever being developed. For what are Baptism and the Blessed Eucharist, but the communication of the Water and the Blood for the generation, and sustenance, and perpetual increase of the communion of the elect unto eternal life? The source of the living stream is in the Cross; the special grace is the Presence of that crucified Humanity. It is the same Flesh, the same Blood, become capable of a mysterious communication; and the eye follows its course through all time, as it ponders beneath the Cross the bleeding of those sacred Wounds. We are, as we contemplate the vision, drawn beyond the sphere of our present consciousness into the region of the Invisible, into communion of spirit with spirit. We are raised insensibly; drawn upwards, we know not how. As we gaze, we are, by a continual increase of a treasure beyond all price, laying up within us stores of supernatural grace, which influence us now in all our inward life, as the impalpable atmosphere acts on our physical frame; but which will develop and expand with all its native energy beyond all conceivable thought, when we have passed within the veil into a kindred world, where God is All in all.

O most marvellous vision of unutterable love, of incomprehensible condescension! How does the vision embrace the whole sphere of the redemption of the fallen, working the first conviction of sin; then deepening it into contrition; then revealing gradually to the illuminated eye of matured faith the graces of the spiritual life, and finally completing the full repose of Humanity, in the union of a common nature with the Ever-Blessed TRINITY.

O vision of love, which has created penitents and martyrs, and saints of every grade and sex, of all time, and place! O orb of light, from which all have kindled their lamps, each according to his measure, from the first flickering of the smoking flax, to the steadfast splendour of a soul illuminated and transformed into the perfect likeness of our LORD'S Divine nature.

Let us, in conclusion, consider the preparation of heart which will, through the grace of GOD, fit us for this gradually deepening apprehension of the mysteries of the Cross. There are mainly two conditions which must co-exist. First, there needs to be a pliancy of the will, a patient yielding of the whole inner man to the teaching of GOD. Our fall arose from the self-assertion of an independent will; and ever since the first fall, the secret strength of all alienation from GOD has been the shaping out a course for oneself, irrespectively of the Divine purposes. The fall necessitated the Crucifixion, and the Crucifixion remedied the fall through the yielding up of the Human Will in the Person of the Eternal SON to the Will of the FATHER. "I am come to do Thy Will, O My GOD; I am content to do it, yea, Thy law is within My heart;"¹ and in order that the atoning Sacrifice might be made, "a Body hast Thou prepared Me."² The return of the human will to a perfect submission to the Divine was consummated on the Cross.

To embrace, then, the teaching of the Cross, implies the response of an obedient will, yielding itself in union with His, Who in yielding up Himself reconciled our nature to GOD. Thus it is not the

¹ Ps. xl. 8.

² Heb. x. 6.

mere laying aside any particular sin, nor the change of one or other portion of a misguided life, that harmonises with the mystery of the Cross; but it is the surrender of one's self-guidance, the laying aside the antagonism of one's independence of thought, of feeling, of action; the passive subjection of the will, which is man's central self, to every expression of the Will of God. The witness of a true conversion is not merely to say, "I have fallen;" but to say, "I have fallen by an evil choice; I have chosen evil by following the way of mine own heart, and I surrender now, not my sin only, but the secret source of my sin, the independence, the self-activity of an alienated will. I accept instead the will of my Creator, though it be in penance, in chastisement, in mortification, and perpetual restraint." As the wax must be softened, before it can receive the impression of the seal, and then, in proportion to its softness, is moulded into the perfect image, even so the yielding of the will is the condition of receiving the impression of the mind of CHRIST; and, according to the perfectness of its pliancy, the true form and features of the image of God are impressed on the transfigured nature. In this tenderness the whole array of hard prepossessions, false reasonings, perverse desires, melts away; and the truth, the beauty, the love, the power, the majesty of eternal things, are recognised. The fountains of the great deep of human remorse are thus broken up, and the flood-gates of the manifold sensations and affections of the human heart are opened, to be directed thenceforward according to His Will, Who thus, in the power of His grace, has taken possession of the soul for which He died.

(2.) Another condition, as necessary as the one already spoken of, is the inward teaching of God Himself; for the illumination of the inner life is no result of human teaching. No eloquence however powerful, no persuasion however winning, no example however holy, can effect such a change even in the very least degree. It is the prerogative of CHRIST Himself, through His SPIRIT, to draw the soul into His own mysterious communion, and thus endue it with power to apprehend and be transformed into His love. He alone can give the capacity to hear and understand what cannot pass through the outward ear; and till His Voice has reached the hidden springs of life, all is hard and dark. It is the Will of the Redeemer, that all His regenerate children should be moved, and drawn through the Cross to rest in Him, for He said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me;" and He does speak to all with this interior voice, revealing Himself in each one, to give repentance unto life. But though such grace is given to all, not all receive it. "Many are called, but few are chosen." Few hear that inner voice, few understand and love. But to those who do hear and follow it, how changed is the whole sphere and compass of their being! At times how quick, how sudden is the change! They who have experienced such a change, have read the meanings of all past convictions; they have the key to all visions, the clue to what once seemed a tangled web of circumstances, without guidance, without end. They see the bearings of the course along which they have been darkly led. The inner life of Creeds, of Sacraments, is revealed. They do not the less cling to external things, to the order of the

Church's ministry; they cling the more, because they understand better; but they have passed beyond the outward forms, and are absorbed in the inner depths of the Presence abiding in them, Which is become their life. They have their own inner rule, by which they ascertain the voice of Him Who speaks. "The sheep" follow Him, for "they know His voice." Before this inner teaching the natural oppositions of the soul are removed, and in the winning sweetness and power of the vision which has entranced the soul, it commits itself to a supernatural guidance with deep, fervent longings; "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of Thy law;" "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God." And these longings grow into a gradual increase of virtue, of grace upon grace, in an ever-advancing life, "perfecting holiness in the fear and love of God."

The conclusion to which we are brought is simply this: whatever may be our state before God, the vision of the Cross, of the Crucified, inwardly revealed to the soul, is the main instrument of its conversion. If any one be still under the dominion of sin, and only dark intimations of better things visit the soul, the sight of the Cross gives an unearthly influence to those better thoughts. If by the grace of God the conscience be stricken by remorse, the sight of the Cross deepens the first terrors of sin into contrition, and speaks hope of forgiveness and peace. If the soul in true repentance is turning to God, the sight of the Cross quickens the abiding sorrow into a "faith working by love." If one has arisen out of the depths of remorse and

fear, the Cross teaches what manner of spirit the new man should be of, and opens increasingly deeper views of a saintly life. If the soul is advancing still, being gradually transformed into the likeness of GOD, the Cross unveils yet inner depths, drawing the life into an inner sanctuary, where it may roam unconfined, and see no horizon, entering more and more into union with GOD, in an absorbing contemplation of His Being, which has no limit but His own Infinity.

O! vision of life, and peace unutterable! O thought of grace, of love, of strength! Would that we might preserve it within our hearts at all times, while we work, while we rest, while we converse, while we kneel before the altar,—the thought of the Crucified!

One of our race, though laden with sin, passed at one step, in one hour, through the vision of the Cross into Paradise. To us it may be many steps, and the way long, and often weary, and our souls ready to faint by the way. But enough for us if only, after much long-suffering, we can “apprehend that for which we have been apprehended of CHRIST JESUS;” enough to awaken in us unceasing hallelujahs through eternity, if at any cost we can embrace, as we are embraced by, that Vision of Love; and carry in our hearts through all changes the Image of JESUS crucified, and be found in Him accepted, though it be after many years, and through much tribulation, by patient continuance in well-doing, while we seek for glory, honour, and immortality. Unto Him Who, to make this calling and election sure, loved us, and washed us in His own Blood, be honour and glory for ever, &c.

SERMON V.

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST.¹

S. LUKE XV. 2.

“AND THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES MURMURED, SAYING, THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS, AND EATETH WITH THEM.”

THE Pharisees and Scribes expressed in these words the whole mystery of the recovery of mankind, little knowing what they said. The three remarkable parables that follow, are our LORD's own comments on their words. It was a similar case to the prophecy of Caiaphas. As he on his throne of judgment was made the unconscious organ of the most explicit revelation of the approaching crucifixion, when he said, “It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and the whole people perish not;” so the murmuring Pharisees became the blind exponents of the deep secret of Divine compassion in the perfect reconciliation of God and man.

It is common to refer to the three parables of this chapter as illustrations of the different sides of

¹ This Sermon, reprinted with some changes in expression since its first publication, was preached at the First Anniversary of the Dedication of the Mission Chapel of S. Saviour, Welclose Square, April 27, 1858.

the doctrine of repentance, as regards the penitent; for in no one of them alone, but in the three taken together, the chief features of the penitent's true condition appear. The lost sheep shows the sinner's utter helplessness after his many wanderings, expressed by the far distant cry of one conscious of being lost without the possibility of return. The lost coin in the foul chamber shows the prostration of the soul under the deep coating of this world's pollutions, while yet its faculties retain the features of the Image of Divinity originally stamped upon them, and ready to be renewed at the touch of the Creator's Hand. The Prodigal son fills up the picture by exhibiting the revival of the will in its desire to return to the lost home, the kindlings of hope, and the effort made in overcoming all hindrances and going straight to cast itself on a father's love. These combined together make up a complete view of repentance on the side of man.

But our LORD's words were more especially intended to explain what had so startled the Pharisees,—the sight of One manifestly holy in Himself, yet mixing with sinners and eating with them. The three parables are primarily an unfolding of that great mystery, the outer form of which they were permitted to behold, while its inner grace was hidden from their eyes. And as, when taken together, they exhibit the doctrine of man's recovery, viewed in reference to man himself, so likewise do they together exhibit the different sides of the same truth, viewed in reference to GOD. For in the Father of the prodigal running forward to meet him on his return, falling on his neck and kissing him, and, as the only answer to his confessions,

“Father, I have sinned,” and “I am not worthy,”—clothing him with the best robe, putting on the ring, and making merry,—we see the intense yearnings of God to recover the lost, and His overflowing joy in receiving home the banished one. In the Shepherd is expressed the same Divine compassion clothing itself in human form to come forth amidst the creatures, following the lost on their own ground, and reaching itself out to them, striving, as one creature in actual contact with another, to save. The woman of the house represents the stooping down of the sacred Humanity even into the depths of human depravity, and searching out by a personal effort, to find and gather up, and then cleanse and remould, each individual soul in whom no eye but His can discern the remains of His own all-but obliterated image. The whole mystery of Divine compassion, originating in the bosom of God, and manifesting itself gradually to the consciousness of the creatures in the successive acts of the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord, is shadowed out in the pictures which these parables contain.

I. These descriptions bring home to our apprehension some faint view of the movements of the secret mind of God. There are two ideas, more or less prevailing, instincts created by the fall, which cloud the whole thought of God in most men's minds. One is, that the Supreme Godhead cannot be interested, or concerned in any real sense, in the condition of His creatures, still less be moved by their joys or sorrows. This idea took a definite shape in one of the ancient philosophies, the Epicurean, which pictured the Godhead as having no

sympathy with the creature, and rapt into a wholly separate sphere of undisturbed and even unconscious repose. This heathen conception was but the exaggerated expression of a thought which is universal, and one so inwrought in the human mind as to need a positive and earnest effort of faith to remove it. It seems to arise chiefly from two causes; (1.) from the difficulty of conceiving how God, having no parts or passions, can nevertheless feel what corresponds with them, with our joy and grief, our desires and regrets; and (2.) from our inability to comprehend pure disinterested love in its highest forms. Another idea, as extensively prevailing as the former, is that One so perfectly holy cannot have sympathy with a sinner,—the feeling which was symbolically expressed in Adam's hastening to bury himself in the trees of the garden, out of the reach and sight, as he hoped, of God; and such as broke forth from Manoah; "We shall surely die, because we have seen God;"¹ and again from the lips of S. Peter, when he first felt the nearness of God; "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD."²

How different is the view which our LORD reveals in the imagery of these parables. The deep moving of the Heart of God in His secret home; the strong yearning arousing Him from His place; the intense anxiety, as He stretches forth to recover, as He bends over, the fallen; and then the extreme rejoicing, as He recovers the long-lost object of this fervent love,—such are the features exhibited in these descriptions. We may be unable to connect this view with the ineffable peace, the undisturbed beati-

¹ Judges xiii. 22.

² S. Luke v. 8.

tude, the essential separation of GOD from His creatures. We fail to reconcile the two ideas. Yet neither can we lower, nor need we fear to embrace trustfully, the outward expressions of Divine love which these parables disclose. It is as a reflection of this perpetually strong movement of compassion in the Heart of GOD towards the lost, that the Angels are stirred to a continual joy in their recovery. Their joy is not a feeling which arises in them first, as what belongs to a creature sympathizing with creatures; but is a consequence of their pure life being strung in perfect harmony with what passes in the mind of GOD. It arises in Him first; it then thrills from Him through the highest orders of pure creatures. What we on earth feel of joy at the recovery of the fallen, is but the distant echo dying away of that same intensity of love, ever arising in the Godhead and from Himself pervading the heavens. The visible anxiety of CHRIST to win back the lost to Himself, was the expression of a deep eternal movement in the Divine nature itself; and the actions and feelings of His Humanity, at which the Pharisees were so unutterably amazed, only betokened a yet more amazing wonder, the intense concern, the inexhaustible compassion of the invisible God Himself.

II. Again we here may trace the connexion that exists between the compassion of the Divine nature and Its visible manifestations on earth. The Pharisees saw the express image of GOD in human form. They were looking on the visible Presence of GOD Himself. But they rejected the idea of there being any connection between what they saw

and the Divine nature. They rejected GOD in rejecting the visible Form in which He came. They committed two errors. They failed to comprehend the nature of Divine love, and they were unable to connect the visible form with the inward invisible grace. This latter difficulty has existed in all ages. "No man hath seen GOD at any time; the Only-Begotten SON, which is in the bosom of the FATHER, He hath declared Him." It is possible for GOD to reveal Himself to His creatures only in an outward form. The veiling of Himself is a necessary eternal law, though varying in its mode of mystery. It was then the visible form of GOD Himself, manifest in the flesh. It is now the visible forms of created instruments in which, by covenant and promise, He has enshrined His Presence, and through which His love reaches the fallen. It is to many difficult to perceive this in the outward ministry of the Church. When it is perceived, how difficult to preserve the constant recollected sense of such a Presence, and the precious earnest of invisible things which the visible symbol assures. Doubts and waverings continually arise. Even when there are no doubts, yet the consciousness oft-times grows dim, and we see not the bright light in the clouds. It is with faith, as with the natural eye, which tries to fix on some bright object in the distance, but again and again loses it.

And yet during the period which intervened between the Resurrection and the Ascension, while our LORD was withdrawing the visible Form of His Flesh, to give Himself through the veil of Sacraments, He spake in the plainest terms of the new Creation of grace that was to arise at His word, to live on endued with spiritual blessing till He

appears a second time. The chief sayings of the great Forty Days are creative, giving to visible forms the powers of His own Divine Life to abide with His elect, as means and pledges of receiving Himself after He had passed into the Heavens. "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My FATHER,"¹ was an intimation of a mysterious personal contact, which should bless us as soon as He had ascended, and was thus able to "fill all things." The supper at Emmaus, when He "was known of them in the breaking of the bread,"² was an assurance that in all future Eucharists, as in this the first after He was risen from the grave, the same Presence would be vouchsafed, though hidden. Such also were the terms in which He bestowed the grace of priestly ministration in the remission of sins. "Receive ye the HOLY GHOST; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."³ And so again, in conveying the general powers of the Apostolic Ministry, as the direct consequence of His own exaltation in His spiritual kingdom; "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth; go ye, *therefore*, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."⁴

¹ S. John xx. 17.

² S. Luke xxiv. 35; ἐν τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου. The same emphatic expression occurs in Acts ii. 42.

³ S. John xx. 22, 23.

⁴ S. Matt. xxviii. 19. μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη . . . διδάσκοντες αὐτοὺς. The two ideas are distinct, though the same word is used in our Version to express them both.

And here a practical lesson is to be observed; for if the Church's sacramental system be the visible mould in which the Divine energy is living and moving, and pouring itself forth upon the world, must not the mould take the shape of its inner life? Must not the inner living Presence give its own expression to the outer form through which it passes? If the deep yearnings of Divine compassion characterise every movement of God towards the creature, must not the same mind characterise the Church, her councils in their judgments, her Priests in their acts and tone, each one of her elect in intercourse one with another? From the fact of the correspondence which ought to exist between the outer form and the inner life, arise the fundamental laws of holiness and sympathy, which are special notes of the true being of the Church.

III. Further, we here see how our LORD's ministry pursued two separate lines, or rather embodied two stages or degrees of intercourse, different in kind from each other. For the Pharisees and Scribes remarked in Him a two-fold degree of familiarity with sinners. To "receive" sinners, and to "eat with them," were not one and the same act. The original word which we translate, "receiveth," implies a benignant and affectionate manner of address or welcome. It is the same word that S. Paul uses, when he beseeches the Romans to "receive Phœbe our sister, as becometh saints;"¹ and again, when He enjoins the Philippians to "receive Epaphroditus in the LORD with all gladness."² In this expression is set forth one stage of fellowship. To "eat with them," was a yet further

¹ Rom. xvi. 2.

² Phil. ii. 29.

stage. Human instincts have always associated with the act of eating together a special degree of familiarity and personal union. It is among men the sign of equality; the seal of friendship. In the East it is the bond of a sacred covenant of peace and protection. The Pharisees and Scribes therefore rightly distinguished this act, as betokening a special nearness of communion, and one of a different kind from the utmost benignity of mere personal intercourse. And there was, no doubt, a deep mystical meaning in our LORD's act of eating with His disciples. This became the more evident, when the act assumed a supernatural form after the Resurrection. How remarkable that He should "eat with them," in His risen Body! On the first meeting after He rose from the dead, "He said unto them: Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb, and He took it and did eat before them."¹ This act could hardly have been necessary to identify His Body. The handling of it was the more striking proof. And why repeat this act? Yet it occurred a second time in the most mysterious interview of all, when every doubt of His identity had been wholly removed. On the shore of the sea of Galilee, in the early morn, that mystical scene which carries the view of faith onward to the dawning of the eternal Day on the immoveable shore, when the perfected number of the predestined shall be gathered in at the feet of GOD, as the measured number of fish were drawn to land in the unbroken net,—He eats with His disciples again.² "As soon

¹ S. Luke xxiv. 41.

² S. John xxi. 12. It is not expressly said in the text that our LORD ate at this time with His disciples, but the Church has so

as they were come to land they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon and bread. JESUS saith unto them, Come, and dine; and none of them durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the LORD. JESUS then cometh and taketh bread and giveth them, and fish likewise." This act thus recurring at an interview which so vividly symbolized the consummation of bliss in the gathering together of the Communion of Saints, must have had a surpassing mystery, stretching into eternity, and can scarcely be understood otherwise than as a visible seal of the final and perfected reconciliation of GOD and man in the participation of a common nature feeding together on the One Source of life.

What a picture then do these striking descriptions bring out to view of our LORD's Presence and mode of communion with sinful man, manifested in the flesh. First, note the winning gentleness, the indescribable benignity of countenance, the yearning affection of voice, of tone, of manner; and these influences exercised on the most unworthy. And this was only the external circle of His ministry, that which, of necessity, was acting continually upon all who came no nearer than to see His Form, and to hear His voice. There was yet an inner circle into which He drew those who were ordained unto eternal life, in which the secrets of Divine love were more and more perceived as the illuminations of the Spirit shed light on those most marvellous acts of fellowship—most marvellous understood the words, as is evident by the heading of the chapter in our version referring to the passage; "12, He dineth with them."

especially to us who understand that it was the CREATOR Himself feeding with His creatures on the same food, and thus in some deep inexplicable reality mingling together in one life.

And what a field of service does this revelation open to us for the ministry of the Church, as it is the ordained organ through which this same two-fold action of Divine compassion, these inner and outer circles of love, are to be perpetuated in the world. What does it teach us, first, of the manner, the tone, the spirit, in which all intercourse should be conducted, specially of the pastor, but of all the elect, towards the fallen, the erring, the ignorant, the wilful, the infirm? What a vital principle of action does it unfold, as needful to bring our temper and conversation into conformity with the will of God, as He seeks perpetually to change each form of sin, or error, or infirmity, into the very likeness of His own Divine Image? And then, secondly, what lessons are here given to the Pastors of souls, when this first outward intercourse has been passed through, the outer crust of human fellowship removed, and soul meets soul, and the inner life is laid open to the influences of individual teaching and personal cleansing, of guidance and discipline; when the grace of sacraments, of absolutions, and intercessions, casts the veil of an unearthly consciousness around, and the spirit is felt to commune with spirit, and the Unseen Presence more and more pervades the inner sense and desires of the new creature? What does the picture we have been contemplating of our LORD's ministry in the flesh teach us of the love, the spirituality, the chastened purity, the intense longings for souls and for

the manifestation of the glory of GOD, which ought to animate such an inner circle of communion, as the breath of that inner life in which the Heart of GOD is ever moving in Its inexhaustible longings for the perfect bliss of all whom He has created for His own glory.

It is of our LORD's love, through His own ordaining, that, in the sacramental system of His Church, ever since His Ascension, and for evermore, in the persons of His servants, He "receiveth sinners and eateth with them." According to their faithfulness in fulfilling their vocation and ministry, the sphere of His own mission in a lost world is continually extending itself. And therefore the remarkable passage, the meaning of which it has been attempted, though feebly, to explain, has its bearing on the occasion which has gathered us together. For we are met to commemorate the planting near this spot of the Mission, which has awakened the sympathies and hopes of so many hearts throughout the Church of England. For what is aimed at here is no ordinary missionary work. To have come into the midst of such deeply-degraded vice, which in utter shamelessness has established its reign in this neighbourhood, and to have set forth in the midst the knowledge of CHRIST, bringing home His truth by earnest preaching to the consciences of such lost ones, would have been the act of a true Evangelist. But this Mission attempts more than this. Its greatness consists in the endeavour to combine together the two lines of ministry which we have been contemplating, the inner as well as the outer circle of our LORD's love; first, winning souls through the external ministry

of His Word, and then drawing them when won into more secret communion and abiding fellowship with God through the internal ministries of personal cleansing and feeding unto eternal life. It seeks in its measure to embody the whole range of the Church's living powers for reconciling God and man; not mere preaching and instruction, but with them the grace of Sacraments, and the Eucharistic Presence of the LORD as the central Source of life; the inner communion of the sanctuary with the outer work in the "streets and lanes," where this moving mass of lost souls is ever passing to and fro—a work fraught with an interest and importance beyond all that we can estimate, when thus brought to bear though only on one small portion of this surging sea of ever growing life peopling this vast city.

There are two practical points telling on every development of the Church's life, on which I would remark before I close. One is the necessity of faith, in order that the inner virtues of the Church's divine agency may flow freely out. The Church of God is visibly present among the multitudes of men, even as CHRIST was visibly present before the Pharisees and Scribes, though it be an object of opposition, or cavil, and ineffectual because of their unbelief. They reject the outward forms through which grace is passing, and consequently the channels of Divine compassion are stayed. As it is with the discipline of the Church, so it is with its healing virtues. There can be no discipline in the Church, where there is no willingness to submit to it. The reason is, that the discipline of the Spirit is for

edification, not for destruction; and the edification of the soul necessarily implies the consent of the will. But this practical truth, which explains the utter abeyance of discipline in these latter days, itself rests on a deeper truth. It rests on the principle, that all communications of life between God and His moral creatures require faith. This consenting will, this living faith, is essential in order that the soul may touch the spring of the hidden graces which lie within the Church's sacramental system. And why is it to disparage CHRIST, to cleave trustfully to the instruments of His own ordaining? Why say, that the supreme Source of life is ignored, because we believe that His river of life flows along channels? When the sea, and the air, and the stars of heaven, all move by settled laws in lines undeviating from the morning of the creation, why think that we are following an invention of our own, in believing that the breathings of the Spirit, and the virtues of the Passion, and the life of the Incarnation, pass ordinarily through channels by settled laws, and that the principle of order is stamped on the universe of grace, not unlike the order impressed by the same Hand on the universe of mind or of matter? If there be "joints and bands" ordained of God, by which "from the Head all the body having nourishment ministered and knit together increaseth with the increase of God,"¹ why are we not justified in believing, that these intermediate organs of communication are as necessary for life in the spiritual world, as in the natural world the vessels through which flow the blood and sap of material life are necessary. Thou-

¹ Col. ii. 19.

sands of years have passed over the wonderful scene of this visible creation, and the life of the moving creatures and of plants innumerable, has preserved the same types, with the same fruitfulness, and richness of beauty, and perfectness of order, as at the beginning, and will so continue to the end. And why is this, but because there was vital energy in the words which God uttered, when He said, "Let there be light;" "Let the earth bring forth," and "the sea?" Every moment of passing time witnesses an ever renewed miracle of created life streaming forth as fresh waves from that first impulse of those creative words, which were not so much the declaration of one act, as the expression of a will that there should be continuous life, and in what form that life should be perpetuated. And why are we not to believe that there was as true a vital energy in the words which the same Creator, when Incarnate, uttered in calling into being the new creation of His own newly-assumed nature, of redeemed Humanity; that when He said, "Go and baptize and teach," "Remit sins," and "This is My Body," "This is My Blood," He was expressing His Will to be impressed thenceforward on the world of grace, and ordaining that life should be perpetuated in those forms which He then created? And why may we not believe, that there would be as much care in preserving the original types of this spiritual creation on which the safety and nourishment of immortal souls depended, as in preserving the types of the material creation, which is to pass away in a moment, being sustained only for the gathering in of His elect; and that His Divine compassion is, by a perpetuated miracle, flowing

out in each baptism, each confirmation, each absolution, each eucharist, instinct with the same fulness of grace with which they were first endued, as the pulses of material life still throb fully through the same forms, in which they awoke to life at the utterance of the first creative words? Might not "the invisible things of God be clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made,"¹ in the case of the spiritual, equally as in that of the material creation, even though there had not been given the assurance of the perpetuity of the life of the Church,—an assurance not given to the material creation,—when He said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world?"²

One other practical truth is to be borne in mind. That any personal profit may arise from dwelling on the living mysteries of the faith, the power of an individual application of God's love must be cherished. We have been considering the conditions of personal life, and personal life has no existence except in individuals. They were individual persons whom our LORD received, and with whom He ate. They looked upon each other face to face. The mystery of the life of the one grew into the mystery of the life of the other by a personal converse. There is in human nature, as an original instinct, a habit of appropriateness,—a tendency to appropriate everything to itself as to a centre. This tendency, when perverted, as it is in us all through the Fall, is the root of selfishness. But the tendency must have a true meaning and a proper end, in accordance with the designs of God ;

¹ Rom. i. 20.

² S. Matt. xxviii. 20.

for no original instinct of our nature is at variance with the Creator's will. And what can such a tendency be but the impression of His will, that every living creature capable of apprehending his God, should have a personal, individual apprehension of Him as his own God, as though there were no other being to divide with him the blessedness, the rapture of such a vision, while nevertheless the bliss of every one is ever mingling in a vast communion of spirits living in the same light of perfect joy? One great mystery of man's final beatitude is, that it is at the same time the perfection of rest in one's own individual joy, and the perfection of sympathy in the common joy of the "great multitude which no man can number." But the primary and fundamental joy lies in the personal apprehension of one's own individual life in God, and thence it flows outward and around in the blessed consciousness of endless, abounding love, knitting "the ten thousand times ten thousand" to the same Centre of bliss. As there could be one disciple alone resting his head on the bosom of the LORD at the Supper of Love, while yet from that same Bosom was unceasingly flowing forth life and joy for all pure created orders of being; and the restful possession of the one was a type of individual blessedness, and yet interfered not with that all embracing Love which could enfold an universe, —such likewise is the eternal law which binds in unity and order all pure life ever feeding on God.

There is a well known principle in the interpretation of Scripture, that every promise made to any individual person, is a promise equally to every one under like circumstances. "I will never leave

thee, nor forsake thee,"¹ was, at its first utterance, the personal blessing of one man: it has lived on to become the individual possession of every one who pleads the promise. All the mysteries of grace are in like manner framed for transmission to individuals. The Church knows not men as a race, but as individuals. "I baptize *thee*" in the Sacred Name; "I absolve *thee* from all *thy* sins;" "The Body," and "the Blood," "which was given," "which was shed," "for *thee*, preserve *thy* body and *thy* soul unto everlasting life,"—are not mere accidental forms of speech. They arise out of the eternal order of Divine love. They are first principles of the law of grace. They have their source in the unity of the Godhead. The individuality of the creature perfect only in its separate possession of God, is the reflection of the Unity of the Godhead perfect in His own independent existence. The forms and words of the mysteries of the Church derive their expression from these eternal verities. Therefore to realise in one's own individual life, as a personal possession, the love of God towards oneself, is part of the faith. Such faith is not merely the groundwork of a personal rest in God; it is the homage due from the individual soul to Him Who created it to be the reflection of His own perfections. "My Beloved is mine, and I am His,"² is the inspired thought of the Bride of CHRIST. This self-appropriation of the object loved, is the true expression of trustful love, and is its rest. It was a promise of personal individual blessedness in some deep mysterious union through God's indwelling in oneself, to which our LORD bid us look, when He

¹ Compare Heb. xiii. 5, with Joshua i. 5. ² Cant. ii. 16.

said ; “ If *a man* love Me, he will keep My word, and My FATHER will love *him*, and We will come unto *him*, and make our abode with *him*.”¹ The Blessed TRINITY becomes the inhabitant, the inner life, the personal possession of the soul of one who loves and obeys. Again our individuality is lost, and passes away into a sea of glory, in which all personal life seems to melt and commingle in the perfect oneness of a common joy, as we listen to the words of intercession which are ever arising before the eternal Throne ; “ That they all may be one ; as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us ; ” “ I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.”² How mysterious and passing all human thought, when we attempt to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory truths,—that He is equally the indwelling life of each one of His elect, and the common centre and fulness which each one shares with all others in a blissful communion !

The practical conclusions to which these reflections tend, both as to the object of the Church’s ministrations, and the groundwork of inward rest and progressive life is,—to realise CHRIST through His SPIRIT in the mysterious communion which He holds with the soul through the varied means which He has mercifully ordained for that end, and in CHRIST to apprehend the hidden Being of the Divine Nature, and be united with It. To these realities which will abide as the only true Life, when heaven and earth have passed away, He is ever drawing His elect onward by a continual progress,

¹ S. John xiv. 23.

² Ibid. xvii. 21, 23.

as the soul yields itself to the attractions of His grace, entering more and more deeply into His love, His glory, His infinite perfections. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." It is the pledge of His love that the possession of His Divine Presence grows and unfolds Itself, circle within circle, deep within deep, till being made one with CHRIST, and CHRIST one with all who are His, His mission is accomplished, and then cometh the end, and He will deliver up the Kingdom to GOD even the FATHER, that GOD may be All in all; to Whom be all praise, and thanksgiving for ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

THE CLEANSING OF CHRIST.

S. JOHN XIII. 8.

“JESUS ANSWERED HIM, IF I WASH THEE NOT, THOU HAST
NO PART WITH ME.”

THE thirteenth chapter of S. John is distinguished by some peculiar circumstances from the preceding chapters. Our LORD's mission among the people was now closed ; He had uttered His last public discourse, and had retired to the upper chamber. He did not appear again before the world, till He went forth to die. The discourses which He then uttered are unlike any that preceded them. There is in them no appeal, nor argument ; no more veiling of His Mind in parables.

The subjects relate to the most secret communion of God with His elect on earth, and the mysteries of their future glory in His immediate presence. There is throughout these discourses a pouring forth of our LORD's innermost Heart, which before had been, as it were, pent up and hidden even from the Apostles. In His whole conduct there is a manifestation of love, and a nearness of fellowship, which evidently took the Apostles by surprise, and gives an unspeakable tenderness to the records of

that eventful night; as though our LORD felt now for the first time a relief in being alone with His few faithful disciples, after His long conflict with the world, and in this quiet pause could speak to hearts prepared to understand His inmost thoughts. The intercourse of that evening was the more touching, because it was the last, and His Agony and Death were so close at hand. S. John opens the chapter, as though he was beginning afresh to reveal the mystery of the Incarnation, and commencing a new revelation, a gospel within the gospels. "JESUS knowing that the FATHER had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from GOD, and went to GOD." The words seem to be the preliminary to some new dispensation, and from their solemnity we should have expected some act of yet greater majesty than had been displayed before, some sudden breaking forth of the hidden Godhead before He finally passed away into the Heavens. But no! on the contrary, there succeeds a yet profounder stooping, a greater self-abasement than was ever before manifested. Then immediately occurred the washing of the disciples' feet: "He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded."

It was the bowing down of the Godhead in the extremest self-abasement, the Infinite stooping before the finite, the Creator at the feet of the creature, in an amazing act of voluntary humiliation. It was an act of a profound self-abandonment of love like to the humiliation of the Cross, and with-

out doubt in its hidden meaning intimately connected with it.

It would be a false spiritualism to do away with the literal teaching of this act of our LORD. It was a divine exhibition of the reverent care with which the human body, the very flesh, should be tended, even its outward purity be jealously preserved. But it is impossible not to pass through the outward act to the great spiritual verities which must have been the ideas chiefly intended by our LORD to be thus impressed on us, of which His external ministering was comparatively a faint, though a most touching expression. All our LORD's words accompanying the act, carry us beyond the letter into an inner life touching the soul. The words, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me;" S. Peter's exclamation, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head;" the actual intimation of a mystery only afterwards to be revealed, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" the remarkable assertion apparently so anomalous, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit;" the feet of Judas being washed as the rest, and yet not being clean, and the reason given, because "he should betray Him;"—all showed that the washing was not a thing outward in the flesh, but an act touching the whole inner life, affecting humanity through its whole sphere of being. The meaning of the act was afterwards manifest. It was explained by the shedding forth of His own Blood, when He was stripped of His garments in the humiliation of the Cross, that He might sprinkle all nations, touching, and entering into, and cleansing all flesh; and this

cleansing to be applied by an ever renewed act of love by the Spirit to the whole life of the redeemed in all ages ; not fulfilled once for all as upon the Cross in the once offered sacrifice, which needs not to be repeated, because it is in itself complete and all-sufficient ; but by individual washings extended and appropriated to each separately existing soul by an ever reiterated touch of the healing Hand, an ever renewed gushing forth of the ever open wounds through the perpetual ministry of His Church.

If we look to the conclusions to be drawn from this touching scene, the first that strikes the mind is our LORD's love in cleansing sinners. The scene illustrates some of the most marked features distinguishing the later from the earlier manifestations of God's love. Throughout the holy Gospels we are conscious of a secret power affecting the human heart beyond anything that we read of in the old Testament. One main cause of the difference is to be found in the distance at which God stands towards man in the old, compared with the nearness to which He has approached in the new Testament.

In nature GOD acts behind His Providence. In the old Covenant He acted behind types and symbols. In both cases His Person is withdrawn, and an impenetrable medium is intervened. The great principle of personal contact, of look, of voice, which by the constitution of our nature instinctively acts upon us, is not brought into play. It was only when the Incarnation brought God and man together by a personal union, that this vivid influence began to operate. There is between the two Co-

venants all the difference between a distant unseen Power, and the touch, the look, the voice of a living Person, coming near and revealing Himself to our sight. Love in the former case is but an abstract idea: in the latter it is embodied in impulses which thrill through all our sensitive frame.

Again, this scene is an exemplification of another principle which has a peculiarly vivid power over the human soul, and which again characterizes the new, as contrasted with the old Testament. Our nature is not stirred by mere power or sanctity, however exalted. It is by these qualities manifesting themselves in humility, in considerateness, in tender acts of service,—that our nature's inmost feelings are moved. Now although the old Testament reveals God as a merciful Being, "long-suffering and of great goodness," yet these latter qualities are scarcely the predominant characteristics of the Divine Nature there manifested. The revelations of His Holiness and His Power chiefly pervade the old Testament. But in the Gospels, these awful attributes, though not withdrawn, are yet veiled beneath the humiliation of God. His yielding to human perverseness, His tender considerateness to human weakness, His stooping down to human wants, are features of the character of the Godhead most prominently revealed to us in CHRIST. And where throughout the Gospels are these marked characteristics more marvellously exhibited, than in the scene before us?

Again, the peculiarly affecting power of our LORD's love in the Gospels depends in great measure on His tenderness to the wants equally of the human body, and of the human spirit. We are

mysteriously compounded of two worlds of being, the world of matter, and the world of spirit. What touches both together touches the whole man. The capacities of suffering which belong to the body, its weakness, its liability to pain keen and intense, are intimately intermingled with the yet deeper and more intense sensations and needs of the spirit. The twofold tenderness extending alike to both these regions of human life, is one of the most marked features of the love of CHRIST.

The healings of the sick, the lame, the blind, the palsied, touch one great sphere of human experience, though yet profounder sensations are stirred by the words which reach the innermost recesses of the soul; "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" "Go in peace;" "I will, be thou clean." There is no one act, which more strikingly marks this twofold lowly care, ministering at once both to the body's wants, and also through the body touching the depths of spirit, than the act before us. It is the combination of the bodily and spiritual cleansing, the tenderness embracing physical as well as mental needs, which gives to this scene its peculiar impressiveness.

Moreover, most important conclusions are to be drawn from this scene as to some material points in the work of repentance. It teaches us that the real cleansing of one portion of our being, is the cleansing of the whole. The having the feet washed, was having "part with CHRIST," and being "clean every whit." The washing "the feet" is identical with washing "*thee*," the whole person. There was to be no partial cleansing. This circumstance illustrates the searching character of true repentance. The uncertainty as to all returnings to God

is lest they should be partial. There is great danger of stopping at the correction of some one or two special sins, as if the work were then done. A sin is felt, arousing the conscience, and efforts are made to remedy it. The soul is restless till it gain some assurance of its forgiveness. Through the grace of God co-operating with the effort, the sinful habit is checked, and the life is amended. But here the earnestness ceases. There are faults still remaining; they are not touched; they are not felt to be burdens, and consequently the repentance does not spread from one portion of the being to another. The work of repentance in such a case has failed. The cause of such defect generally lies in this. The desire was not to be cleansed from sin, but from the effects of some particular sin which happened to distress and rouse the conscience. It was some circumstance or result of the sin, rather than its intrinsic evil which caused pain. Sin repented as sin, as a thing hateful in itself, as seen in the light of God, as a thing done against God, as defiling our nature in His sight, as hindering our perfection which the soul has learnt to desire,—this sense of sin, for the same reason that it extends to one, must extend to all sins alike, to every fault, to every idea of the presence of sin. It will spread from one sin to another, as one sin after another is perceived by the awakened conscience. This spreading character of repentance marks its truth. The truth of repentance is seen only in a continued and growing earnestness, extending itself to various sins and faults in succession, deepening as it advances, ever on the watch to discern fresh forms of evil, suspicious of itself, becoming more and more particular as to details, more strict in self-examination, more

careful in self-discipline. It is the correlative of the cleansing of CHRIST; for the cleansing of CHRIST is not of one sin alone, but of the whole sinful nature. An absolution has relation to the whole man, not to one special portion of his being; it is not of one sin irrespective of other sins, not of sin in its particular acts; but of sin in its principle; not from some one fault offensive to God, but of the total offensiveness of the being who has fallen; of the innermost root of evil, and so of all its outgoings; of every fault therefore, as of one. There can be no forgiveness of one sin which does not involve forgiveness of the whole man. It is only as the entire soul is capable of the grace of remission, that any portion of the soul is capable of it. Repentance therefore must be perfect in its aim and tendency, however imperfect in degree. It must have spread through the whole being, or include the power of gradually spreading through the whole, as greater light within reveals to the soul a growing knowledge of its sinfulness.

Again, this scene illustrates the momentous truth, that repentance is not merely the conviction of sin, nor merely the purpose to amend, nor merely penitential confession. It is not giving of alms, or making restitution, or the hardness of self-discipline. All these in their measure enter into it; but these things may be, and yet the true inner spirit, the soul of repentance, may be wanting. True repentance is the sense of sin as done against love, against tenderness, mourned by a heart that has begun to love in return.

Love is the soul of contrition. We feel it by a

natural instinct, if relations become alienated, if friends are at variance. It is not the abstract sense of wrong, irrespective of the person wronged, that needs to be brought home to the heart, in order to reknit broken ties, and form a real reconciliation. The repentance of Judas was the mere abstract sense of wrong, and it was hard, selfish, despairing. The repentance of S. Peter was the sense of wrong done against a Person Who loved him, and Whom he loved in return. It was the speaking face of Love turned on S. Peter, in which he read the ingratitude as well as the sinfulness of his sin, that aroused the bitter tears, in which his heart, stirred to its inmost depth, found vent. It was the total absence of this characteristic which hopelessly alienated Judas from the compassion of the Son of man. Real repentance grows in the soul as the soul becomes conscious of sin done against Him Who is seen still kneeling before us, still reasoning with us, still stretching forth His hand to touch us, still anxious to wash us, still waiting till we turn towards Him, and put forth our feet, our hands, our head to be washed; and in Whose hands as He kneels we see not water, but Blood, still flowing from His ever freshly bleeding wounds, wherewith He was "wounded in the house of His friends." Repentance to be true, must be not merely entire, or tending to become entire, in its extent through the whole being, it must be fervent with a sense of ingratitude, of awakened love responding to Love Which has been wounded by our sins and has offered Itself of Its own sweet will in death, to cleanse away the sin of those who caused the precious Blood to flow.

Nor does repentance grow less, as sin becomes less; nor is the felt need of cleansing less, as we become more clean. There was in this scene the same washing for all alike. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," was equally applicable to all, though said to one only; yet among them there were great varieties of character and spiritual attainment. There was S. Thomas, in whose heart lurked the unbelief of his risen LORD. There was S. Peter, who was about to deny Him with an oath; and there was the Betrayer. There was also the guileless Nathaniel; there was S. James, prepared to drink the cup which his Master drank of; and S. John, who lay in His Bosom. Nevertheless they were all alike in a state to need His washing. We see illustrated here the momentous truth, testified by constant experience, that repentance is still going on, yea, rather is deepened, as true life advances. It might be thought that the greatest sinner, if penitent at all, would feel greater need of repentance, than the saintly spirit which has never known a deadly sin. It is not so. The darker intensity of sin causes the repentance to be less perfect. Sin debilitates the powers on which repentance depends for its developement. It deadens the sensibilities of the conscience, and makes the heart less open to tender impressions. On the contrary as the life becomes purer, and the faults fewer in number and slighter in character, so also the sense of sin becomes more keen, the hatred of it more intense, the sorrow for it more tender, the apprehension of GOD's holiness more vivid. Each spot of darkness is more seen and felt, as the surrounding light increases, and so the repentance of the saint deepens

with his growth of sanctity. There is a real repentance in the pure, because they have not greater purity ; a true contrition in the lowly and meek, because they have not more of the lowliness of CHRIST ; an unceasing regret in the heart of the man of prayer, because of his distractions and wanderings. It seems to the purer soul that it needs for itself a work of cleansing grace, as deep and searching as the most fallen can need ; just as the same cleansing touched the faithful and the unfaithful Apostles. It is not meant that there is no difference in sins, or that there are no distinctions of grace in separate souls ; but that the cry, the longing to be cleansed, arises more fervently from the soul that is capable of higher views of purity ; and that the least fault in the eyes of the more saintly appears a worse evil, than deadly sin appears to the more fallen. Whatever stage of spiritual life we may have reached, we need a Lent, we need the discipline of special repentance ; its need will be felt the more, the more perfect our life becomes. Here is the truest sign of a saving repentance,—if one find his desire of repentance deepening, as his practice of virtue becomes more steadfast.

There is here also a lesson to be learnt, not merely as to our own state before GOD, but also as to our duties towards others. When our LORD had finished the washing of the disciples' feet, and had sat down again, He said to them ; " If I, your LORD and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet ; for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you." This example cannot be limited to the Apostles'

office; it was primarily intended, we cannot doubt, to symbolise their ministrations as Priests, theirs and their successors, for ever, in applying the virtues of His precious Blood; but the idea of "washing one another's feet" must also include the ministries of love which the Apostles owed one to another, as men, as brethren, as having the same infirmities, and therefore needing at each other's hands a mutual spiritual tenderness. It is addressed to them as types and representatives of the whole Church, and through them this law of CHRIST's love was to pass to the very least of the disciples, teaching us the perpetual duty of ministering one to another. The scene must have exhibited to the Angels a lesson of lowly love, and toilsome labour, impressing on them a new idea of the extent of the ministrations to be exercised by them towards redeemed man. "Sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation," as they watched this scene, they must have resolved to give themselves to stoop more and more, and not to shrink from touching even the foulest stains, or darkest spiritual diseases, of the suffering and sinful members of CHRIST's Body.

Among men Christianity has taken a deep and abiding impression from this act of our LORD. To it, at least in part, we may trace the long succession of lowly ministerings and works of mercy, the countless forms of bodily and spiritual healing, which have run like a golden thread through the records of strife and division, of war and cruelty, that have too frequently marred the course of the life of Christendom. In all such scenes of compassion we see that act of our LORD ever repeating

itself, something at least of the same mind displayed. We see our LORD manifesting Himself in His servants, the same mysterious Form of Love incarnate still stooping from above, still kneeling at the feet of the unclean, washing them and wiping them with the towel wherewith He is girded. Each earnest loving act to cleanse away from a redeemed humanity its soils and stains, to mitigate its sufferings, to hide its shame, to promote its peace, is a renewing of the mysterious scene of mercy of that eventful night, a repetition of the washing of the upper chamber on the night of the Agony. Each form of misery that passes before us in our path through life, is a call to remember that amazing scene of tender self-humiliation ; a call to pause and consider how best to apply the healing of His grace, Who now is working out the purposes of redeeming Love through the ministrations of His servants, to all of whom He hath said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do, as I have done unto you."

What unavailing regrets will there be at the last Day, to feel how much of human suffering might have been spared or healed, and we would not ! And what remorse at the thought of how much larger a measure of love would have flowed out upon this cold hard world, if we had not failed to co-operate with His grace Whose Hand is ever stretched out to cleanse its sin away, and relieve, if not wholly remove, all its woe !

This symbolic act of our LORD has, moreover, its bearing on the whole daily life of His elect. He refers to a washing that has previously taken place,

—“He that is washed;” and then speaks of the subsequent need that would still have to be met—“needeth not save to wash his feet.” Catholic tradition has interpreted the previous washing of holy Baptism. It is the one washing complete in itself, which embraces the whole man, and infuses into the soul a new nature, a new creation of grace. This can never be repeated, even as there can be but one creation of the natural life. Nor will the translation into the life to come, need another baptism. The life into which we have been baptized, is the one undying life, which by a natural progress passes into a perfect union with God in glory. There are changes and increase in this life of the Spirit, as in the life of the flesh; but there is no second birth.

But sins following after baptism, and marring the perfectness of its growth, need to be washed away. It is not, as is sometimes thought, that baptism contains in itself the power of remedying all after falls. It imparts a covenanted claim to ministries which are ordained to renew the forfeited purity of baptismal grace; but does not itself, by an anticipatory influence treasured up, repair its own losses. Other means are provided to meet the case of sin committed after baptism. Prayer available through the intercession of CHRIST, confession of sins, alms, mortifications, acts of reparation, and similar exercises of penitence, have, according to their measure, a healing influence, through the graces of the Atonement, in restoring the lost purity of the regenerate life. The absolving power of the Church is the special ministerial agency, which, having relation respectively to Baptism and the Holy Eucharist,

repairs the losses of the first grace, and removes the hindrances to the ever increasing fulness of the perfected grace in the communion of "the LORD's Body." These exercises and ministries of repentance are "the washing of the feet." Nor can any limit be placed to their effect in removing the stains of sin which defile the inner life of the regenerate through their earthly course; for he that is thus washed, "is clean every whit."¹

The New Covenant has thus its own perpetual graces of revival and forgiveness, to counteract the infection of evil from without, or the rekindlings of the corruption of the old nature from within. He Who recreated us, is ever renewing the decays of His own work in us, ever repairing the breaches of His covenant. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speak-

¹ "The LORD saith it, the Truth speaketh it, that one needeth to wash his feet, even he that is washed. What should it be, my brethren; what think ye? but that the man in holy Baptism, indeed, is washed every whit, not 'except the feet,' but the whole man: yet, seeing thereafter one has to live in the midst of human affairs, of course one treads upon the earth. Therefore our human affections themselves, without which in this mortal state we cannot live, are as the feet wherein we are affected by human affairs, and so affected, that, 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Every day, therefore, He washeth our feet, Who intercedeth for us: and that we do every day need to wash our feet,—that is, to direct the ways of our spiritual steps,—we confess also in the LORD's prayer, when we say, 'Forgive us our debts, for we forgive our debtors.' For 'if,' as it is written, 'we confess our sins,' doubtless He Who washed the feet of His disciples 'is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;' i.e. even to the feet, wherewith we move to and fro on earth." (S. Aug. on S. John, Hom. 56.)

ing, I will hear.”¹ No pleading of His love, of His sacrifice, can ever be unavailing. Even the single petition of His prayer, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,” has its own promise of renewed reconciliation; how much more the continued acts of penitence and the ministry of His Priesthood, to which He hath said, “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them?” But as the soul and body are ever contracting fresh stains in the passage onward to the grave, like the traveller by the wayside soiled by the heat and dust, so there is unceasing need to repair to the “Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” Contrition ought to be a daily grace, for remission of sins is a daily need. Nor can we doubt thefulness of His renewing, Who “having loved His own which were in the world, loved them unto the end,” and in the constraining impulse of that everlasting love gave this symbol of His cleansing grace. His departure “out of this world unto the FATHER” has not lessened either His care or the virtue of His ministrations. They are become the more effectual, because He has entered into the glory of His FATHER. “Him hath GOD exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a SAVIOUR, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”² “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto GOD by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”³ Our LORD once taught His disciples the extent to which brotherly forgiveness between man and man should be exercised. “Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he re-

¹ Isa. lxvi. 24.² Acts v. 31.³ Heb. vii. 25.

pent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.”¹ This injunction, adapted to our feebleness, can be but a faint image of the Divine compassion, of the disposition of His own sacred Heart to forgive His brethren their offences against Himself.

This disposition in God, as it is the encouragement to repentance, is also a constraining motive to avoid sinning against Him. Our own instincts teach us, that the tenderer the sensibilities, the readier the disposition to forgive, the more inexcusable, the more heartless the wound inflicted. If we measure our sins by this law, what must be the weight of the guilt which we have contracted, how sad the least offence which even unconsciously we may commit against our God! Nevertheless we may take courage, and return from all our wanderings, and be assured that He is more ready to help us, than we to pray to Him. He feels all our difficulties, and pities all our frailty. “We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”²

¹ S. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

² Heb. iv. 15, 16.

SERMON VII.

REPENTANCE.¹

S. LUKE XXII. 61, 62.

“AND THE LORD TURNED, AND LOOKED UPON PETER. AND PETER REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE HAD SAID UNTO HIM, BEFORE THE COCK CROW, THOU SHALT DENY ME THRICE. AND PETER WENT OUT, AND WEPT BITTERLY.”

S. PETER'S repentance is the only instance recorded in the New Testament of a perfect recovery after a fall from grace. The full gift of the HOLY GHOST had not, indeed, as yet been poured forth; but S. Peter had passed three years in constant communion with CHRIST. They were years full of acts of faith, love, self-sacrifice. Special revelations had been vouchsafed to himself alone. He had been pronounced “blessed.” He had had a personal share in miracles and mysteries. He had been washed by our LORD'S own Hands, and fed on His Body and Blood. So powerful must such grace have been, so sweet such communion, so blissful its inward light, that to fall from it and need to be converted again, is not, indeed, unprovided for in the New Covenant,—God forbid; but is, as it were, un-

¹ This Sermon, now reprinted, was preached as one of the Lent Sermons in Oxford, in 1858.

looked for, as being beyond the ordinary laws of grace. As the Penitent Thief is the singular instance of conversion from deadly sin at the last hour of life ; so S. Peter's recovery is the singular instance recorded of a return to GOD after a denial of CHRIST.

Yet S. Peter's repentance is not to be regarded as an isolated case. It is a type continually renewed ; a sample of a great law of love ; a pledge of the infinite outgoings of the grace of the Atonement repairing its own losses. S. Peter is an unfailing witness to the end of time, that penitents may attain the highest places of the kingdom. The encouragement which his recovery gives to penitents, is a perpetual fulfilment of the blessing which was not limited to his own lifetime :—" When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."¹ That one so great should have so fallen, is humbling to the highest saint ; that having so fallen, he should have been so restored, is the hope of all who have in any measure " done despite to the SPIRIT of grace."

The wonder of S. Peter's repentance is its perfectness ; his more than restoration ; his rise to a far higher sanctity than he had before attained ; his rapid advance to perfection from that very hour. S. Augustine has taught that a perfected repentance is a rarer miracle of mercy than an uniform faithfulness. But so great was S. Peter's repentance, that he never lost his distinguished place among the Apostles. He arose almost in the moment of his fall. The completeness of his repentance superseded the necessity of penance. Even though our LORD's thrice-repeated charge, " Feed

¹ S. Luke xxii. 32.

My sheep," be understood as a renewal of a forfeited commission, in compensation for his three-fold denial; yet those words involved no period of probation to test the reality of his repentance. Grace had already repaired all the loss, and clothed him even with yet higher gifts.

S. Peter's was a mixed character. Great strength, and, as often happens, equally great weaknesses, were mingled in him. His danger lay in his strength, as much as in his weakness. His fall was not a mere sudden surprise; it arose out of very serious faults of character. One fearful fact in the history of the soul is, that early sins, though long put away, if not constantly watched against, break out again, sometimes more violently than before, under sudden temptations in unexpected forms. S. Peter is an instance of this liability. It would seem, that, unlike some of his brother Apostles, he had sinned greatly in his youth. His first shrinking from our LORD's approach, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD,"¹ betokens it. When the temptation to deny his Master came upon him, he "began to curse and to swear;"² and we cannot suppose such evils to have at that time first arisen. They must have been a return of the habits of earlier life; scars of a violent and irregular temper not wholly healed. There was also in him a presumption and self-sufficiency which always threatened a fall. Human temerity could hardly have soared higher, than when he said, "Though I should die with Thee," (some of the Fathers understood it *for* Thee,) "yet will I not deny Thee in anywise."³

¹ S. Luke v. 8.

² S. Mark xiv. 71.

³ S. Mark xiv. 31.

There was in him a constant tendency to self-assertion. “*Bid me come unto Thee on the water.*” “*I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.*” And again, what immediately occasioned his fall, was a moral cowardice strangely mingled with much physical boldness; for just before his alarm at the notice of the maid-servant in the judgment-hall, he would have risked his life single-handed against the whole Roman band in the garden of Gethsemane. With these serious defects, there was a variable impetuosity of impulsive feeling constantly bringing out into great prominence the good and evil, the strength and weakness, of his character; as e.g., upon the lake, when one moment he would walk upon the water with his LORD, and the next was ready to sink with fear.

To such a character the circumstances of his temptation were peculiarly trying. His Master in the hand of His enemies, overpowered, unresisting; the disciples fled, and concealing themselves; the traitor successful in his treason; the very rabble of the city triumphing; himself become the jest of a losing cause; and no sound, no sign from Heaven to justify the long-cherished faith. The difficulties which are not seldom found, to confess CHRIST in humiliation; to resist the jeer; or to bear up consistently, when the heart’s faith has sunk in trial or despondency,—must have fallen upon S. Peter in their most aggravated form. There are few, even of the most religious, who may not trace in themselves some resemblances to the weak points of his character, and some correspondence in their yieldings under temptation to what proved his downfall.

Many lessons are suggested by this history. First we here learn the possibility of perfect repentance after grace has been forfeited; of a return to God from sin committed after special favours and gifts of love. It is written, "If any man draw back, My Soul shall have no pleasure in him;"¹ but here we have a reversal of that terrible sentence. Again, it is written, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the HOLY GHOST, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance;"² but here we learn that even the denial of the LORD Who bought us, does not involve this utter reprobation. We learn from Scripture that grace is given to improve and to increase; that where it fails of this effect, the covenant of mercy is broken; yet here we see how not merely the loss of grace, but the denial of the Author of grace, calls forth fresh love in restoring the breach and recovering the fallen.

If then any one, mourning inwardly, should say, "My case is different from that of all others: not only have I sinned against grace, but none can tell the warnings that I have neglected—the repeated warnings; or what I once experienced of the love of God, and have despised; or what sweet communion with Him I once had, and have lost: none can have sinned away such mercies, and still live,"—the answer to such despairing thoughts is easy. Could there be warnings more frequent, or more striking, than those given to S. Peter? Could any one have held closer or more familiar communion

¹ Heb. x. 38.

² Heb. vi. 4.

with our LORD? Could any have received more of the inner light of His love than one who had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, who had been with Him in the chamber of the blessed Sacrament, and during the Agony in the garden of Gethsemane? And yet he denied his LORD, and after his denial was wholly restored.

Further, there was a special mercy overruling S. Peter's fall, bringing out of it even greater good. It was made to teach him what otherwise he seemed unable to learn. He needed to learn distrust of self. With burning zeal, devoted love, entire self-sacrifice, his heart was closed against the idea of his own helplessness, of his own nature's utter weakness, its need of a continual stay on God. He prayed not, when he heard of a fierce temptation coming. He could not watch one hour. He never questioned his own steadfastness. The idea of the utter feebleness of humanity in itself seemed scarcely perceived by him. He knew not the weakness of his own unassisted nature, its constant liability to fall. And he was left to this his own personal strength. His trial was as much as to say, "I take thee at thy word, and now see what *thou*, thy own nature, without Me, can do." He must meet Satan, alone and unarmed, that in his shame, confusion, and tears of bitterness, he may learn to trust in CHRIST, and not in himself.

And thou who desponded at some past fall, hast thou no similar lesson to learn of deeper humility, of closer dependence on God? Hast thou no self-trust? Has thy strength always been in prayer and watching? Hast thou always borne in mind

the utter feebleness of human nature, and the perpetual need of casting it upon God, as its only stay? Have not thy very gifts been a snare, so that thou hast looked on them as thy own, as what would endure of themselves without continual grace? May not, then, the sinking, the despondency which has followed thy fall, be the very means whereby thou wilt learn those truer lessons of thyself? Until his fall, S. Peter was wanting in some of the very elements of the religious life, of the very conditions of advancement. He was wanting in humility, meekness, reverence, fear, and self-distrust. He was often contradicting his LORD, “Although all should be offended, yet will not I.”¹ He even reproved Him,—“This be far from Thee, LORD.”² He even refused proffered grace,—“Thou shalt never wash my feet.”³ We see nothing of this afterwards. How different is his after-tone: “Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?”⁴ “His Name, through faith in His Name, has made this man strong.”⁵ “Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD.”⁶ The very key-notes of his Epistles are; “Be clothed with humility.”⁷ “Be sober, and watch unto prayer.”⁸

May not this be *thy* case—that the foundations of thy life need to be laid lower, in a more perfect self-abasement; a deeper humility; a more entire leaning upon God; a more complete abandonment

¹ S. Mark xiv. 29.² S. Matt. xvi. 22.³ S. John xiii. 8.⁴ Acts iii. 12.⁵ Acts iii. 16.⁶ Acts iii. 19.⁷ 1 S. Pet. v. 5.⁸ 1 S. Pet. iv. 7.

of all high thoughts, independence of will, self-glorying, vanity, spirit of contradiction, and such-like; that beginning afresh, these hindrances being removed, thou mayest hide thyself from thyself, hide thyself in a perpetual recollection of the Divine Presence and support, as the only stay and safeguard of a frail, ever-falling humanity?

S. Peter is not merely the assurance to us of the possibility of a perfect restoration after falling from God; he is also the model of all true penitents. God formed His Church out of the fallen, and He gave an example of the grace of repentance in the case of one to whom, because of the singular greatness of his faith, it had been said, "On this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."¹ What could not be exhibited in our LORD, because He was "without sin," was exhibited in His chief Apostle. As S. John is the true model of the progressive development of a supernatural love, so S. Peter of a perfected repentance.

The first main element of S. Peter's recovery was a spirit of self-accusation, a ready acknowledgment of sin and error. This disposition he had shown before. His outburst of remorse openly before his brethren, at his first call, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD," was a proof of it. He is the one only Apostle whom at his call we find on his knees in confession at the feet of his Divine Master. It was in the same spirit of ready confession that, when he heard our LORD say, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," he in-

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 18.

stantly answered, "LORD, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."¹ On the occasion of his fall, the spirit of self-accusation deepened into its most touching form, and could express itself only in bitter tears and silent anguish, as he covered his face and hurried out of the hall into the dark night, to be alone and weep. And yet, had the tendency of his mind been to catch at excuses, and extenuate his fault, and withhold the full confession, there were pleas ready, which, alas! we can imagine some of ourselves to have urged at such a time. "Why is my blame so great? All the disciples have fled. I have followed Thee even into the judgment-hall; I have ventured at the risk of my life. I did not mean to deny Thee; it was but an evasion, and it was to save my life; it was but to quiet the clamour, to escape notice: my mind was steadfastly faithful all the while. Did I not lately, in the garden, I alone of all the disciples, take the sword and offer up my life?" How different is the whole attitude of the fallen Apostle! How instantly does he rush to the full conclusion—to the sight of his sin, as it appeared in the eye of God! How entirely free is his manner from the least appearance of self-justification, which so slowly lets go one plea after another, clinging hold now to one, now to another support for pride, ready to do anything rather than acknowledge the guilt irrespectively of all its consequences.

Self-accusation is one essential element of true repentance. And how needful a lesson to learn well! The saddest part of our sin is, that we are so slow to confess it. Sin ever gathers round it an

¹ S. John xiii. 8.

array of self-defences. Subtleties and evasions, special pleadings, shrinkings from humiliation, lingerings of pride, all gather round the consciousness of sin, and rise up instantly to hinder the only remedy of guilt, the only hope of restoration. For it is a law of spiritual life, that there can be no release, no freedom, no return to the pure light and love of God, till the acknowledged sin is cast out of the soul, and laid at the foot of the Cross. "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin : for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," is the great penitent's inspired thought ; the full acknowledgment, and then the perfect cleansing. They coincide as by a necessary law in the mystery of repentance. The unacknowledged guilt lies within the soul, a permanent hindrance to the grace of God, as a blight that settles on the herb, gradually weakening all the powers of its inward life. Confess the guilt, let all self-excuses be surrendered, and the soul revives, as the green herb from which the gentle rain of heaven has cleansed all the blight away.

Again, from S. Peter we learn that faith is a main element of restoration. His faith was preserved to him through the intercession of his LORD : — "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."¹ Now faith is not the belief of any particular dogma ; nor is it the same as a spirit of assurance ; neither is it any peculiar feeling appropriating some special promise ; but it is the bent, the aim of the whole soul. It is the prevailing direction of all the powers of the man toward God ; it is the apprehen-

¹ S. Luke xxii. 32.

sion of the inner man embracing, grasping the invisible; living in things which are unseen and eternal, and raising him out of the sphere of sight which lives in things that are temporal. Faith thus lays hold of one particular promise at one time, of another at another, ever growing by its own inherent power of expansion, having its unutterable convictions of peace; its own "witness of the Spirit;" its own "hidden manna;" "its white stone" with "the new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."¹ But faith is the posture of the whole inner man—the tenour and essence of his life. "The just shall *live* by faith."² Through it the invisible affects the man more than the visible: the unseen stirs him to his depths, the seen touches only the surface of his life. This grace was eminently a characteristic of S. Peter. To him first the FATHER revealed the SON. He first confessed CHRIST; "Thou art the CHRIST, the SON of the living GOD."³ Afterwards, when the LORD taught the full doctrine of the Eucharist, the Communion of His Flesh and Blood, to be the life of the world; and many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him; when Judas showed the first signs of unbelief,—S. Peter was the one who accepted the mysterious words. "Then Simon Peter answered Him; LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."⁴ The same grasping at supernatural things led him to desire to walk on the water with his LORD. He was ever growing in the apprehension and realisation of great invisible realities. And thus he had learnt to

¹ Rev. ii. 17.² Rom. i. 17.³ S. Matt. xiv. 16.⁴ S. John vi. 68.

regard sin in the light of another world—sin abstractedly in itself, as a loss of spiritual life, as a thing abhorrent to God, as an utter contrariety to all that his soul was aspiring after. Therefore, when the sense of the sin he had committed was awakened in his soul, the judgment-hall, the excited scene before his eyes, the fear of death, the fear of scorn,—all disappeared; and before his mental eye rose up the scenes by the lake of Galilee, and on the Mount of Olives, and in the journeyings by the way; to his memory returned the words of warning he had disbelieved, now proved true; the many other words he could not understand at the time, now as surely about to be fulfilled; and his own promises so basely falsified. In the crowd of that judgment-hall, he felt but the One Presence of the LORD Who stood before him, and the look of that One Countenance alone of all that were bent upon him as he hurried forth, fell on his heart, and its floodgates of sorrow were broken up.

To rise thus above all the worldly consequences of sin, all its mere temporal effects, to read one's sin in the light of God's Countenance, to view it as we shall view it on our death bed, stripped of all accidents, with its awful consequences, as we pass into eternity,—this is the attribute of faith; and through the preservation of his faith, as our LORD assures us, S. Peter arose from his fall. We need to pray, "LORD, increase our faith;" in order that we may see our sins in their true form and colour; that we may have "senses exercised to discern between good and evil;" that sins now lurking in us unseen may be made known to us; that sins we have long seen and confessed, may be more ab-

horred; that we may know ourselves more as God knows us, by a quicker sensitiveness, by a purer light. The sense of sin depends on the growth of sanctity. As we grow better, we see sin clearer. As we have more of God, we realise evil more vividly. The greatest saints are therefore the deepest penitents. The bright light of purity in which they live, sets off more vividly the darkness of the spots which stain the field of their soul's life. The more they advance, the more truly they repent. As we see, e. g., the power of truth more clearly, we are the more ashamed of our deceits. As we realise purity, so we shrink from our impurities. As we perceive love and largeness of heart, so we despise our selfishness. The more God shines into us, the more we loathe our own vileness. We judge by the contrast. Now faith reveals these supernatural sights of better things, and therefore it becomes an essential condition of a true repentance; for repentance is a loathing of our sin, as the vision of God grows within us.

S. Peter's repentance turned upon his love of the Person of CHRIST. This had been long the moving principle of his life. His indignation at the idea of his Master's suffering; his refusing to be washed before the administration of the blessed Sacrament; his taking the sword, and then striking with it; his entering the judgment-hall,—were all impulses of a fervent, though unchastened, love; a love to our LORD'S Person. And this gave its secret power to that look which our LORD, when He turned, cast upon him. The wounded love, the pity, the reproach, the renewed warning of mercy which that

look expressed, kindled his loving remorse, and caused his passionate outburst of grief. That piercing look revealed the feelings of that most loving Heart, with which his own heart was so bound up. And as love thus moved him to repentance, love was the secret principle of his life ever afterwards, and therefore the LORD put to him the thrice-repeated question, "Lovest thou Me?"¹ It was the secret grace of his perseverance, as it had been that of his conversion.

It may seem as though S. Peter's love to our LORD were too human, too much that of a man toward his fellow. It did indeed need chastening, increased reverence, more of that deep adoring awe which S. John earlier learnt, and which S. Peter learnt at last in the shame and humiliations of his fall. But love to our LORD must needs be human, —human in its purest, highest form. The Incarnation of GOD has made an essential change in the relations between GOD and man, and so in the love that binds us. He took our nature, and ever abides in that nature. He is Man eternal, as He is GOD eternal. The whole redeemed world would cease to exist, if He ever ceased to be Man. He loves and will evermore love us in that nature and through its sensations; and He draws us to love Him through the same nature, with the impulses of which humanity is capable. He loved with a human love, and He is to be loved in return with a human love. The love of Mary, of Lazarus, of the Magdalene, of S. John, of S. Peter, above all of His blessed Mother, were different forms of human love, according to the different dispositions of those different

¹ S. John xxi. 15.

persons,—not ceasing to be human love, though purified, raised, sublimed, as it mingled with divine love, and became in them a wondrous mixture of the affections of grace and of redeemed humanity. As in the sacred Heart of JESUS human love and divine love exist, each of the highest order, and unite and beat together in one harmonious pulse, and are the bond and channel of communion between the Blessed TRINITY and a redeemed world, the source of all true life that flows into the veins of a restored humanity; even so in the heart of each one of His elect, formed in His image, according to the capacity of each, the affections of nature and of grace, human and divine, join together and combine in a mystery, which reflects the mystery of His own Heart of love. He consecrated the human affections to Himself in His human form as their proper end, so that through His Humanity they might centre upon the eternal Godhead. Therefore now and evermore to embrace Him, and cleave to Him in His deified human love, is the true aspiration of the purified human heart. Therefore penitent love has ever delighted to dwell on His Wounds, as the marks of His love and His sufferings for our sin; to pay devotion to His sacred Body; to realise the Agony of His Soul; to dwell on His human Countenance during His deep sorrows, on His sinking form, on His thorn-crowned Head, on His exceeding loud cry of death, in which He bowed beneath the consummated burden of sin. The sight of His sorrows in the shame of the judgment-hall touched the deepest chord of remorse in S. Peter's soul in that night of shame; the prolonged contemplation of His Crucifixion has ever since that hour produced

the truest, deepest penitents of all ages. Love is of the very essence of repentance, and love is ever associated with a person, and the true movement of the deepening and enduring love of penitents circles around the Person of JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified.

There are two habits of devotion necessary to be cherished, in order that the grace of such a repentance as we have been contemplating, may be the more worked in us. One is the habit of meditation on the Person of JESUS CHRIST. It is evident from what has been said, that the realisation within the soul of our Divine Master and His love, is one moving cause of true repentance. But how can this be realised or impressed, or become an object of influence, except through habitual contemplation? "Faith is the evidence of things not seen;" but how can faith realise the object, except by feeding on it, till it become an habitual vision of the soul? Again, love can be cherished only by habitual intercourse, or ever-renewed inward feeding on the beloved object. If there be no converse, or communion of thought, love must decline and die. And how can an invisible person become the object of love, except by inward contemplation? We may continue to use forms of words, and correct statements of doctrine, or we may feel a general awe in the consciousness of God's Presence and of His claims on us; or we may have instinctive feelings of right and wrong, which operate and stir the conscience; so that there may seem to be a stay for religion within the man. But it is not in the nature of the human heart to love another, unless that

other become a constant companion, or unless his beauty and amiableness become strongly impressed on the soul, and be borne always in remembrance. The grace of GOD moves and operates according to the laws of humanity. Grace is above nature, but it is according to nature. It acts on nature, and raises nature up to the level of GOD, but still it acts in and through humanity. What, then, would stir the heart to love according to nature, the same will stir the heart to love above nature. And what is this but the contemplation of the object, followed by an habitual feeding upon it? And how otherwise can we love CHRIST? How otherwise can He have such influence over the soul, as to stir its inner depths, awaken the deeper founts of sorrow, or kindle the more fervid yearnings after perfect conformity to Himself?

We must measure the guilt of our sins by the sorrows of GOD in the Flesh. We have no proper rule of our own by which to measure the guilt of sin. It is not an object of earthly barter. It falls under no earthly merchandize, on which a value has been set. Sin has a bearing on the world to come, on the condition of spirits, and the eternal relations between GOD and the creature. We have no line to fathom these depths. The consequences of sin are altogether out of our reach. When we attempt to trace its consequences, and describe its effects, we feel ourselves to be at once beyond our compass. Sin has converted angels into devils. Sin has ruined this lower creation of GOD. Sin brought the flood and the fire of Sodom, and it has in its train disease, and famine, and war. It has

created death, and made death eternal. All these are as certain rules and proportions by which we can form some estimate of the guilt of sin. But they are after all partial and imperfect measures. The only true and adequate measure of the guilt of sin is the Blood of GOD Incarnate and the sorrows of His sacred Heart. Have we any means whereby to measure the value of that most precious Blood, and of that Agony?

That Blood was given in exchange for the soul, and was the price of the sin. That Blood is the only price at which we can set it. There is a relation of co-ordinate value between the Blood of our LORD, and the sin of man; for the one was accepted as an equivalent for the other. And nothing else could be so accepted. Learn, then, to look at sin in this connexion; not sin in the aggregate, but individual sins. Measure by this price the special besetting sin of thy nature. Weigh it in the scale against the weight of that Sacrifice which bowed to the Cross the Incarnate GOD. There alone you read its true character, its amount in the estimation of eternity. As man learns to apprehend more truly the nature of GOD, while he lives on, and time passes into eternity; so, as he lives age after age, when time is no more, he will learn to measure better the guilt of sin. View the last sin which lies freshest on thy conscience by this estimate. The very next time thou art tempted, before thou sinnest, call up that awful Vision, the expression of that Face, with its untold depth of sorrow and reproach, which fell on S. Peter in the judgment-hall, and the Body on which the Wounds are still visible in the heavens. Say, "shall I add a fresh pang to that suffering

Form ? Shall I do a deed which cost such a price to atone ? Could I bear the look of that Countenance, were He now suddenly to reveal Himself ?”

If the curtain should now uplift its folds, and that Countenance could be unveiled, It would be felt to express to many the same words now, the last which He has uttered since His Ascension, reproving the unfaithful, lest they perish ; “ I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember, therefore, from whence you have fallen, repent and do the first works ; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place, except you repent.” “ Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die ; for I have not found thee perfect before God. Remember, therefore, how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.” “ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten ; be zealous therefore and repent ! Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” “ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.”¹

¹ Rev. ii. 5 ; iii. 2, 19, 22.

SERMON VIII.

THE CALLING OF CHRIST.

S. MATTHEW IX. 9.

“AND HE AROSE, AND FOLLOWED HIM.”

IN these few words is condensed almost all that holy Scripture records of S. Matthew. He had been engaged in the world's business, and was still at his post, when the LORD passed by, and said unto him, “Follow Me.” What preceded this call, what previous intercourse with our LORD, what secret communications of grace, what impressions, what communings in his own heart,—is not revealed. But when the call of GOD fell on his ear, the response of his will was instantaneous; “He arose and followed Him.” The feast that S. Matthew gave was probably his last parting with his former companions. The life of an Apostle succeeded, as the development of that one act of self-devotion, the fulfilment of the vocation to which in that eventful hour he surrendered himself.

S. Matthew is a type of the multitudes who, with more or less of faithfulness in their several generations, have obeyed the inward attractions of grace, giving themselves with an undivided heart to the

LORD. Such supernatural influences have acted on the elect of all ages, as in earlier days when Abraham came forth from his father's house, "not knowing whither he went;" or when Moses chose "the reproach of CHRIST" as "greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" or when Elisha left his twelve yoke of oxen to follow Elijah. But it was not till the kingdom of the Incarnation with its full gifts of the SPIRIT arose, that these Divine influences entered in among men as an abiding and all-pervading power in human life. The change has operated in two ways. Through the grace of regeneration man has received a greater capability for such attractions, and higher calls are vouchsafed through fuller outpourings of the HOLY GHOST. The workings of the SPIRIT are now less clearly known than in the Scriptural age, because there are no inspired hands to pen the records of the histories of the saints, distinguishing the true from the false. But "the LORD'S Hand is not shortened," nor has His promise failed; and the SPIRIT was promised to abide with His elect for ever.

The vocation of an Apostle, though the highest in the Kingdom of GOD, next only to that of our LORD'S ever blessed Mother, is yet but one vocation of grace among many which rise above the ordinary level of the Christian life. Nor is it only in vocations which, like that of an Apostle, are separate from the world, and from the sweet charities of home, that the powers of grace exercise an overruling predominance in the life of the people of GOD. His ways of service know no limit but the order of the world; and they who in every place are striving to subordinate the claims of natural love and duty to the laws of

the SPIRIT, and to consecrate themselves and their all to GOD in their appointed course, may be in truth ever arising and following JESUS, in the same mind in which S. Matthew left "the receipt of custom."

There are characteristic features distinguishing all such developments of the higher order of grace, irrespective of outward circumstances, and manifested equally in all ages. They show the sameness of the Blessed SPIRIT, the uniform character of His operations as He meets and influences the minds and hearts of His creatures, notwithstanding their manifold individual diversities. Let us note some of these characteristic features.

I. There is a power in grace which overrules all powers of nature, drawing all alike within its sphere, and giving them a new direction. Souls are thus strengthened to hold a free and disengaged course among surrounding objects, and to choose among conflicting claims such as tend most surely to the glory of GOD, or to greater advance in sanctity. Those who are influenced by such grace discern the proportions of relative duties, and give themselves to serve GOD in the highest, bearing with willing heart the cost of the self-sacrifice which such a choice involves. Natural worldly objects are thus preserved in their true place in relation to redeemed man, as order is preserved in the material universe by the mutual graduated subordination of the various forces which are at work, according to the laws of gravity. It is not that the attractions of any natural object are necessarily sinful. GOD has Him-

self ordained them, and formed in us the tendencies through which they influence us. The receipt of custom was not necessarily sinful to S. Matthew. But GOD has also ordained that these attractions over the human instincts should give place at His call to the attractions of a higher order.

Infinite are the varieties of detail and diversities of character, which are thus sanctified by the SPIRIT, and drawn by the power of a supernatural grace, to fulfil some mandate of the Divine Will. It may be in bearing without a murmur some crushing grief, while still as faithfully as ever discharging a course of duty, and as full of tender consideration for others; or it may be in uncomplaining patience, yielding up what was once a strong will and high temper by a continual self-sacrifice in little daily acts, heaping coals of fire on the head of unreasonable and thoughtless exactions. It may be in a life-long sickness, which is become the occasion, if not always of cheerfulness, yet always of thanksgiving. It may be even in a monotonous routine of trivial duties, in every detail of which, however homely, the Eternal Will is recognised as the rule of life. The principles in all such cases are the same that formed Apostles. It is the mighty truth received into the soul of a call to devote oneself, and as a consequence the sustained endeavour to bring one passion after another, one impulse after another, into a unity, into an harmonious single-minded course of obedience to the high constraining inspirations of the SPIRIT. It is a question often asked, whether a religious life passed out of the world in a consecrated community, or one passed amidst the claims of society and of home,

be the more difficult. The answer may be found in the principles which have been stated. If the highest view of either course be taken—if both alike be understood to be the concentration of all the powers of the soul to their one true end, in each several sphere of life, as God ordains, then the difficulty is the same in each, because it is alike in each the subjection of self, the subordination of the great antagonistic forces of our lower nature to the highest rule, to the supreme dominion of the will of God.

II. Again, such an obedience to the callings of grace is trustful for the future. It has power to offer up, as a part of the sacrifice, all fears of consequences, the shrinkings of nature from the results of a choice. There is nothing more striking in the history of the callings of the saints of the New Testament, than the quietness and simplicity with which the attracted soul passed out of its old into its new order of being, although there were no doubt in every case inward strugglings which are not recorded, for it was no purpose of Scripture to record without special cause the secret trials of individual men. The instantaneousness of the obedience, and the quiet perseverance of the after course, which the Scripture history exhibits, impart to these acts of self-devotion the appearance of their being, as it were, matters of course, and invest with singular simplicity histories which are in truth intensely supernatural. It is impossible to exaggerate the immense issues of such a choice, as that of an Apostle, or of any one of the more devoted of the first Fathers of our spiritual race,—the almost in-

evitable spoiling of their goods, the certain contempt, the rude severing asunder of all old ties, the violence of the hatred and persecution that almost infallibly beset them afterwards. The interior struggles which must have been experienced in the determination to brave all such consequences, are wont to be forgotten, vanishing out of sight in the halo of unearthly brightness which surrounds their heroic self-devotion, the first stirrings of love ere it had waxed cold. But the sacrifice could not have been without its cost at any hour.

The secret of those calm transitions out of one world into another—for the following such a call was no less a revolution of the inward life—was trust in Him Who called them. They believed in CHRIST, and in the power of that faith followed Him, as He called them. At the mouths of the great Eastern rivers a wave at certain times rises out of the deep waters, and bears onward in one long swell over all obstacles high upon the shore: and if the seaman lets his bark readily and straightly give itself to the heaving roll of the wave, he is safely borne on its crest, though if his hand falter and his unsteady bark swerve, he is cast aside and founders. It is thus with the grace which calls to high aims. It is instinct with a power which bears onward those who trust to it, raising them above all results, and placing them by the effort, or rather by the power of God preventing and sustaining the effort, on a higher level of the spiritual life. They have passed beyond many of the trials which hindered and perplexed them before, though they have entered upon another sphere of trial, perhaps testing them yet more severely. But they are con-

scious of an increase of strength, a higher sphere of duty, and a diviner influence, to which they commit themselves with renewed hope.

There may be yieldings of the soul to such calls without counting the cost, which appearing to be true at first, fail in some after trial. I do not speak of these sad wrecks of a once bright promise. They do not disprove the power of the grace of God. They arise, perhaps from a heedless blindness to the consequences of a moral choice; or an ignorance of what is needed in order to correspond to the claims which such a law of life demands; or from a weak sinking under unlooked-for temptations. Such seems to have been the case with Demas. Such infirmity marred the earlier stage of S. Mark's history, though he made a second venture which rivalled the course of the chiefest Apostles. Such failings are but proofs of the need of preparation of heart to meet aright the impulses of the Eternal SPIRIT.

In order to follow such calls, there specially needs a readiness to endure suffering. The warning that our LORD gave to S. James and S. John, though said to them alone, is implied in every call to the higher places in His kingdom; "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"¹ It is certain that the mortifications of the natural life, the surrender of the joys of our own will and the objects of passion, to pass into a course of unceasing self-denial, into a selfless region of spiritual control; to lay a check on all our senses, and strive after a true restful conformity with God's

¹ S. Matt. xx. 22.

will,—these efforts involve keen trial, however bright an illumination of the Holy One may ever shine around it. And the minds that rightly follow such a call count the cost of suffering, though not knowing what it may be. It is not S. James and S. John alone, but all who follow our LORD, as they followed Him, say by implication, as they said, with a like forethought of impending trial, but accepting it for the kingdom of Heaven's sake—"We are able." They are sustained in strength, not by an oblivion of possible trial, but by the trust that He Who has called, will also uphold them through the struggles, whatever they be, which the call involves; and that the wave of grace which bears them on is the precursor of the many waters which swell upward, and roll onward through eternity in the ocean of His love, Who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

III. Again, in yet another respect there is a resemblance to be found in all such calls of grace, however the outward circumstances may differ. They are alike in the primary principle of choosing God, as the sole end of one's being. They may vary in each individual case as to the manner of the service. The proximate objects on which each individual soul is bent, may be infinitely diverse one from another. One may be a work of mercy towards the lost or helpless; another a patient watching by the sick-bed; another the sweet endurance of a fractious diseased temper; another the continual effort to be kind to the ungrateful; another the sustained struggle against an impure or proud thought; it may be the day-by-day labour with the

hands in order to bear another's burden; or the cheerful acceptance of unchanging loneliness—the blighted prospects of a life. These are the passing, shifting forms into which grace casts itself in accommodating its power to the variable destinies of humanity; they are the masques of the inner spirit adapting itself to the things of time and change. But all who seek to attain the perfectness of a spiritual life in any earthly form, are in fact through that form reaching out their hands unto God, are raising themselves into an imitation and union with His Being; and although through infinitely various means, yet with an entire unity of will and purpose, are together arising and following Him, and Him alone in and through all. Generally it is only after many years that we learn the apparently simple truth, that it is not what we do, but how and for what end we do it, which determines our faithfulness. The long scheming after ways and objects of life, the many wishes for change, the dissatisfied comparison of one state with another, the complainings about outward circumstances—which form a large portion of the unceasing thoughts of many, are the results of not apprehending this simple truth. I do not say that the choice of a life's work is not eventful, and a point to be earnestly weighed, but that grace requires us to think less of the work itself, than of the object which we set before us, to be attained through its means; to view our work simply as a means of offering oneself and one's all to God, ever seeking to please Him Who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

A life thus ever rising above nature in every-

thing, however minute, either done or suffered, already partakes of eternity. Nothing, perhaps, more saddens us, as we advance in years, than the thought, "how much of what I do, how much on which I have spent my best energies, my most ardent thoughts, is evanescent; I am myself immortal, but my work is like water spilt upon the ground." It is a sad haunting vision, that the time is coming when all forms of earthly life, such as e.g., blameless literary pursuits, or domestic love, or works of art, or manual labour, will pass as the bubble rises and bursts upon the surface of the water. But this burden of vanity does not weigh upon the efforts and attainments of grace, or the details of a life in which grace is become the ruling principle. All that is done or suffered has then its part in the eternal world. Every subdual of passion, each successive hour of patient endurance of pain, each act of kindness, each offering of self-sacrifice, every unselfish surrender of the will, every good confession, or meditation, or communion,—they are elements of an enduring life, leaving a residue in the character as it matures, which will afterwards manifest themselves in undying forms of glory, having eternal results hidden with CHRIST in God.

They, therefore, who are striving to put from them everything that hinders the simplicity of a pure service, and to bring every thought, impulse and act, as a willing captive, into obedience to CHRIST, may feel in themselves that they are every hour, in all they thus do, casting the energies of their life on what is real and unchangeable, on what will surely accompany them into another

world. "Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, yea, saith the SPIRIT; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them;"¹ "their works,"—their occupations, and exercises of grace, have with themselves an eternal endurance. Such a thought may not have much value in the full spring of earthly activity; but when sorrow has dulled the sense of life, or the shadows of the evening are felt to be lengthening, they become one sustaining element of the mind as it dwells more and more in the future; and they are full of peace.

Lastly, the words of the text teach us that, in the drawing near of JESUS to our souls, there is entering into us, not a dogma, or an act of forgiveness only, or a mere hope of future glory, but also a life now. S. Matthew not only penned the holy Gospel—he embodied it in his life; "he followed Him." S. Paul's creed was a living form of self-devotion; "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the SON of GOD, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."² He predestinated us, not to be apt learners in a school of theology, but "to be conformed to the Image of His dear SON."³ The calling of GOD is to the soul's true life an intense practical reality. But we have need to impress this truth on our hearts more and more. Who does not feel that his spiritual stature dwarfs beside the Communion of Saints; how much more beside the "full measure of the stature of CHRIST?" One reason of our imperfect progress is to be found in the want of a living practical apprehension of

¹ Rev. xiv. 13.² Gal. ii. 20.³ Rom. viii. 29.

our LORD's teaching, in His dealings with those whom He drew nearest to Himself. He taught them to make efforts and continual self-sacrifices, and as they arose to make them, they drew nearer to Him. He deals with us in like manner, ever calling us onward. We have need of a more constant activity in quickening the energies of our being, as the callings of grace come to us. Preserve a spirit of effort, of continual endeavour. Seek each day to do some one thing better. Numbers of amiable people are simply living on the lees of former years, and are not conscious of any one fresh endeavour for long periods of their lives. The allurements and attractions of grace are constant. It should therefore be the constant aim of the soul, to add to the gains of former times the advancing attainments of each successive period of life. To be always looking out for some fresh point of spiritual effort, though it be only at each time in the slightest exercise of the soul's powers, is the secret of great progress. We need, moreover, perseverance in our resolutions. Resolutions are too often but opiates to the conscience ; the fact of having made them is an effort, and the soul looks upon them as a gain, contemplates, and rests upon them. A resolution is more truly the starting-point of some continuous practice. It needs to be made with great wariness ; but, once made, it is to be kept as a pledge and continual incentive to spiritual earnestness, a definite aim in the sphere of eternal life.

Be thus sincere with yourself. There is an untruthfulness involved in making resolutions which are not carried out. The least result is an unreality of personal religion, wasting the strength

and consistency of character. There is in such a case no progress; rather there must be, however insensibly, a retrograde movement in the soul's life; for the failing to follow a movement of grace is in itself a loss, and a falling back from God.

The time will come, when we shall stand before the powers of the spiritual world, which, though invisible, and as yet "very far away," have nevertheless already laid their attractions upon us. We shall then know the grounds of their magic influence, and see them in their beauty. We shall know what those Objects are, for which "the great multitude, that no man can number," have "sold all that they had;" to attain which they have gladly laid down their lives. We shall know them hereafter, even if we win them not. We shall know them, though it may be only in their loss. Who can tell, what it will then be to feel, that more of effort, more of perseverance, would have secured for ever, what will then be hopelessly removed from him? But, ever blessed be His holy Name, "the callings of God are without repentance" during the day of trial. Let us hasten to redeem the past, that we may follow on to know all His will, as He is pleased to reveal Himself to us; and knowing it, fail not to fulfil, with increasing diligence, all good works which He hath prepared for us to walk in. Let us seek to know more and more, lest we fall short of our heavenly calling; and ever grow in readiness to obey, lest we miss any part of our predestined bliss.

One caution only needs steadily to be kept in view. It may appear as though the higher call-

ings of grace necessarily involve places and ways of service out of the ordinary course of human life, that they cannot consist with what is common and undistinguished. Incidentally indeed it has been already implied, that this is not so; it has been said that such callings may have their fields of exercise in every-day trials, and the simplest forms of service. But such a question, so nearly affecting the visitations of God, is too important to be passed by without a fuller and more distinct notice.

We can hardly draw distinctions as to the relative value of different vocations in the Eye of God, or the possibilities of sanctity within their several spheres; to say, where all are perfect of their kind, which is most perfect. God, indeed, requires different modes of service, and wills that manifold forms of grace should be embodied in these varied manifestations of life. He calls those whom He will out of the world's ordinary ways, endowing each member of the Body with special gifts according to his need. Such special callings there have been in every age, as at the beginning. He thus calls some among us now. He everywhere shows this His unceasing care, His Providence for His people, for His Church; the same now as in the Scriptural times. "One is taken, another left." Some are still called to leave "the ship and their father;"¹ others are bidden to "go home to their friends,"² manifesting in old accustomed ways "how great things the LORD hath done for" them. To supply the manifold necessities of His suffering, or lost, or helpless members on earth—to counteract the ever-

¹ S. Matt. iv. 22.

² S. Mark v. 19.

renewed and shifting forms of evil, through which Satan seeks to destroy the work of Redemption—to preserve among us manifestations, however imperfect, of the various features of His own Humanity, “that nothing be lost” of the completeness of His life in the flesh, even its outward forms being ever reproduced in every age, in one or another of His members as he is “able to receive it,” His suffering life in one, His poverty in another, His ministerial toil in one, His separation from all earthly ties in another,—even as He preserves the manifold types of His natural creation,—whatever may be the secret cause of His elections of grace, His SPIRIT “dividing to every man severally as He will,” He still decrees how the lot should fall and on whom, calling out of the beaten paths those who should arise and follow Him in unusual ministries and forms of devotion. But this is not ordinarily the way of His grace. Ordinarily the lot of our life is determined by early associations, or the force of constraining circumstances, or the choice of parents, by His natural Providence raised into the higher spheres of the SPIRIT by His grace pervading the whole Body; and to follow CHRIST does not of necessity involve anything new or unwonted; to be perfect in Him does not always need change. To “abide in the same calling wherein we are called” as it were from our mother’s womb; to strive each day to do the wonted service more perfectly; to infuse and maintain in every detail a purer motive; to master each impulse, and bring each thought under a holier discipline; to be blameless in word; to sacrifice self, as an habitual law, in each sudden call to action; to take more and more

secretly the lowest place; to move amid constant distractions, and above them, undisturbedly; to be content to do nothing that attracts notice, but to do it always for the greater glory of God; and let each day pass seemingly as though it were lost, bearing no manifest fruit, nothing eventful, but a monotony of the "trivial round," varying only as the shifting fabric of a cloud that hangs silently in the summer sky, whose slight though perpetual changes are observed only by thoughtful eyes musing in fancy on its beautiful motions, ere it altogether pass away—to be ever growing in watchfulness and care faithfully bearing the secret unknown burden of this undistinguished destiny, drawing every impulse and wish more and more into union with the unseen, but ever-present God,—such a course of necessity is the general lot, and is the preparation of the greater proportion of the "cloud of witnesses," daily forming around the glorious place of His Majesty, Who is ever more and more "glorified in His saints."

To seek with a single eye to discern what is His will for oneself, through the outward circumstances that encompass us round about and the secret guidings of His illuminations gradually revealing themselves more and more clearly within, is to every one the sure hope of final peace. There remains only to persevere in lowly obedience to what the conscience witnesses to be the calling wherein He looks to find us when He cometh forth to see how His servants have occupied their talents till He come, that He may gather in His elect out of every place from the four winds, content to be only what His choice has willed us to be; rejoicing to believe

that He has given us a place and a name in His book of life, and seeking in thankful co-operation with His grace thus to go on our way, "till the end be," that we may at last rest, and stand in our "lot at the end of our days."¹ May He thus keep us through His power, as by His grace He hath called us, that we may evermore show forth His praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to His service, and by walking before Him in holiness and righteousness all our days. "Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only-wise God our SAVIOUR, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

¹ Dan. xii. 13.

SERMON IX.

THE EFFECT OF TRUTH.

S. JOHN XVII. 17.

“SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH.”

THESE words occur in the intercessory prayer which our LORD offered to the FATHER the same night in which He was betrayed. It was an intercession which He then commenced, to be continued till the fruits of His Passion were accomplished. We cannot doubt that the same petitions which then arose from the upper chamber are pleaded now in the heavens before the Eternal Throne; that the substance of our LORD's perpetual intercession is the same, though the scene of its offering is changed. Among the momentous points of that intercessory prayer, the text is one of the most remarkable. In its brief compass our LORD shows the connection which exists, according to the laws of redeemed humanity, between truth and sanctity.

We are accustomed to attribute to truth only the advancement of the intellect, and sanctity to the indwelling of the HOLY GHOST. Both these connections are true. But still the assertion remains clear, that truth is also a cause of sanctity.

For our LORD does not here mean by truth, Himself, the Source of truth. He explained His meaning, when immediately He added; "Thy Word is truth." He is speaking of doctrine. He prayed that through His doctrine sanctity might be imparted. He is Himself, through the SPIRIT, the Source of sanctity. But He uses instruments in the act of sanctifying. He sanctifies through sacraments; through secret communications of grace; through manifold gifts of an ineffable Presence, of which the soul alone is secretly conscious. But He sanctifies also "through the truth."

Similar effects are attributed elsewhere in Holy Scripture to knowledge. There is indeed a knowledge of which Scripture says, "it puffeth up;"¹ but the kind of knowledge there meant is clearly pointed out. It is the knowledge that is without charity. Knowledge that "puffeth up," is opposed to "charity which edifieth." But this is not the usual way in which Holy Scripture speaks of knowledge. Thus, e.g., it is written; "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST Whom Thou hast sent."² The knowledge of GOD is here represented as identical with the highest, the most perfect life. The same idea is expressed in one of the fervent prayers introduced by S. Paul in his Epistles; "that I may know Him (CHRIST); and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death."³ He views the knowledge of CHRIST, as the infusion of the very spirit of the Passion, and the life of the Resurrection. Such, again, is the import of our LORD's own words,

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

² S. John xvii. 3.

³ Phil. iii. 10.

when He said to the Jews, "The truth shall make you free;"¹ implying that the liberty which frees the soul from the bondage of sin, and re-unites it to God, is the result of true knowledge. Again, S. John's Epistle repeats the same view, when he says, "We know that the SON of GOD is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true."²

It is evident, therefore, that there is a vital organic connection in the regenerate soul between the doctrine it receives, and its practical life; that, according to the law of our redemption, a new revelation of GOD is intended to be a new transformation of our nature.

We here see one cause of the hopeless degradation of the heathen world, even in its most refined and advanced state of mental culture. The Greeks, and subsequently the Romans, were intense searchers after truth. They greatly honoured their teachers, and possessed the knowledge of some true doctrines, the remains of ancient tradition, or the instinctive conclusions of the mind. But they committed this fatal error: they separated the idea of truth from the idea of goodness. Truth was discussed in their schools of philosophy, but it was to them only a philosophy; it was not a life. They had lost the connection between the two, and they could be at ease while discussing the highest doctrines, and yet following the lowest standards of morality. In this discordance they felt no wrong done to their moral being. This habitual condition of mind lies beneath Pilate's question, when,

¹ S. John viii. 32.

² 1 S. John v. 20.

amazed at our LORD's assertion, that He was come to "bear witness to the truth," he asked of Him, "What is truth?"¹ What connection is there between truth, and what I am doing? Why speak of truth now? Why connect it with the course of justice? Truth had no concern, that Pilate could perceive, with putting to death an innocent man, on what he himself saw to be a lying accusation.

The heathen had even gone further; they had associated with their idea of Deity all manner of wickedness. Lying, theft, adultery, murder, cruelty, had been committed by those whom they called gods. All that they knew of life, even highest life, even Divine life, was polluted with sin; while in the groves and porches of their academies they were speculating on the profoundest doctrines. It was therefore to them a startling revelation to say, as the Gospel said, that truth was only truth to those who lived it; that the law of restored humanity was, that each advance in illumination should be an advance in spiritual purity.

Again, this same principle shows the fallacy of referring to Jewish customs and the standard of Jewish morality, as is not uncommonly done, to justify lax lives in Christians. Men refer, e. g., to permitted licence in the intercourse of the sexes, in the case of those who under the earlier covenant were in favour with God. But there is no parallel between us and them as to the standard of human life. During the Mosaic period the Incarnation had not taken place; the HOLY GHOST had not as yet come to abide in man, as his sanctification.

¹ S. John xviii. 38.

The truth of the sacredness of the human body was not revealed; it did not as yet exist as a fact. The Jews, therefore, could not sin, as we should sin, in the permitted licence of their laxer law. They knew not that it was corruption; nor was it corruption to them in their spiritual state, as it would be to us. For the same cause, love, when revealed in CHRIST, was “a new commandment.”¹ Retaliation, and the confining the duties of human brotherhood to their own race, were prevailing ideas, permitted axioms of moral life, consistent with their view of love. Love in its fulness, its forbearance, its inexhaustible kindness to enemies, was not revealed as a truth, till it was revealed in the Atonement, the redemption of our common humanity in CHRIST. The Scribes and Pharisees did not sin, as we, if we followed them, should sin, when they taught their disciples to “love their neighbour, and hate their enemy.”

It is the same error, when men plead against the counsels, or voluntary precepts, of Christianity, that they occur not in the moral code of Israel. The Commandments alone were then given; the precepts were not revealed. Voluntary poverty, e. g., was revealed only when our LORD lived it in the flesh. His life was the revelation of this precept, to be thenceforward perpetuated, as the special condition of those who were called to receive it. The single life chosen the better “to attend upon the LORD without distraction,”² was not taught to the earlier people of GOD. It was a consequence of our LORD’s manifestation of Himself in the flesh, as a Virgin of a Virgin born; for

¹ 1 S. John ii. 8.

² 1 Cor. vii. 35.

while thus sanctifying the line of human births, and marriage as their instrument, He endued with a special grace and resemblance to Himself the unmarried state chosen for His sake. Jewish spirituality, therefore, is no standard for Christian life, unless we can reduce the compass of Christian truth within the limits of Jewish truth. We cannot claim as our own the great facts of a regenerated nature; of an Indwelling of the HOLY GHOST; of a union of the spirit and the flesh with the SON of GOD; of a resurrection already commenced in the soul; and with this magnificent array of supernatural verities, still plead the standard of Jewish practice, as an adequate representation of our own. We should by so doing pursue again the course of the heathen world, making religion a philosophy, and separating it from the life.

Again we here see the true nature and course of Christian revivals. As a general law, a revival of doctrine precedes a revival of life. If we trace back the history of the Church, this order is found to prevail. We appeal to the first ages of Christianity, as the time when love was warmest and devotion most intense, and this deeper life arose out of the freshness and fulness of the first manifestation of the truth. To take a later instance; at the Reformation souls were quickened with an ardent zeal, and men, for what they believed to be the truth, could go without shrinking to the stake, counting it joy to bear their witness for GOD, even at this stupendous cost. But before the Reformation, notwithstanding the errors that marred its course, a revived study of the Holy Scriptures and

of the earlier traditions of the Catholic faith, had worked a deep impression. Again, in the last century the revival of Evangelical piety was preceded by the earnest preaching of the great doctrines of grace, such as the fulness of the Atonement, and the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, which in the preceding age had been obscured. Our own day bears witness to a yet wider, deeper, fuller tide of spiritual life which within twenty years has changed the face of the Church of England; but before it arose, long-forgotten truths had been unfolded, and what was lacking of Catholic truth in the Evangelical movement had been supplied. In each case life was the result, not the cause, of revived doctrine. The truth preceded, not followed, the quickening of the soul. Revivals that arise from feelings and mere inward persuasions, whatever good may be associated with them, from the very law of our nature decay with the feeling. Revivals that arise from truths which fasten themselves in the soul, expand and grow with the truths themselves, and become like them abiding principles. We see at once the difference between a change that has grown out of some new and striking principle of truth apprehended by the soul, or one that springs from a sudden impulse, or transitory excitement.

The reverse is equally true. Erroneous doctrine has a direct tendency to produce practical evil. We may, therefore, justly dread the consequences of the errors now rife among us, as likely to manifest their results in the less earnest character of those who accept them. Their tendency, accord-

ing to the ordinary laws of our nature, it is not difficult to foresee. If, e.g., it be admitted, that any part of Holy Scripture may be mythical—the book of Genesis merely the heroic, i.e. the fabulous portion of the history of an ancient people,—that Inspiration does not extend equally to all portions of the Book of God,—the soul has lost the main foundation of truth, and is tossing upon restless questionings, which may extend to all the articles of the faith. Or let it be supposed, that the Incarnation of God is merely an external fact, having its completion in our LORD, not extending beyond Him, not, as it surely is, a living power which in and through Him by grace and supernatural influence acts on all forms and stages of our redeemed nature to assimilate it to Itself,—the soul has lost the groundwork of its sanctity, the highest standard and motive for human effort. Again, let the idea prevail, that our spiritual improvement consists only in a higher degree of natural culture, and not in the infused grace of an indwelling Presence of the HOLY GHOST, transforming our natural faculties,—and the cold hopeless creed of Materialism is the result. Or again, if Truth be not viewed as a dogmatic system external to the soul, embodied in Creeds and Sacraments, to be accepted by an obedient faith, as the fixed centre and guide of our life, but that the convictions of each one is to himself the standard of truth,—there follow all the dangers and deceits of a mere subjective religion, when the soul of itself forms its own system of belief, its own views of God, its own theory of redemption. Or if the old-established faith in eternal punishment for the impenitent and the repro-

bate, be rejected, the greatest motive to the fear of sin and the terrors of Divine wrath, is taken away.

A doubt entering the soul on any great verity, loosens its hold upon some principle of moral action, casting the soul adrift, lessening its energy for good, and relaxing its bond of communion with God. Some principle of truth underlies every separate feature of sanctity, and is its legitimate seed in the soul. To lose any principle of Divine Revelation, is therefore to risk the loss of some measure of grace, and so of future glory. God may indeed, and, we cannot doubt, does in innumerable cases infuse the fulness of grace into willing hearts in the day of His power, as the result of the scantiest knowledge of the truth, or even without knowledge, where there is the child-like mind which has the will and the capacity to receive all truth, as it is revealed; so that "even the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err."¹ When defect of knowledge is no defect either of desire to know, or of faith to apprehend, ordinary laws cease to apply. There is a fulness of discernment given in the "unction from the Holy One," which "knoweth all things,"² in their essence, if not their details; but the ordained relation between principles of truth and principles of practice, between reasons and results of action, between revealed doctrines and the living graces in which they are embodied, remains unshaken; and neither he who teaches, nor he who is taught to reject or question any one portion of the revealed mind of God, "once delivered to the saints," can tell what measure of saintliness and of future beatitude may

¹ Isa. xxxv. 8.

² 1 S. John ii. 20.

be lost for ever, as the legitimate recompense of wilful error.

If it be thus needful to uphold the vital practical results of truth, it is equally needful to warn those who hold the truth, of the dangers and deceits which, adhering to the fullest and most correct apprehension of doctrine, may yet make shipwreck of their faith.

1. It is clear that, as we receive any fresh truth, our first thought should be, "What does this involve? To what change, what progress in my life, does this naturally lead?" The thought may arise, but the action fail to follow. Although, unquestionably, there is, by the laws of the spiritual life, a link, a connection between the truth and its living development in action; yet, through faults in the character this connection may be broken. There may be, e. g., a weakness in the will. What is exhibited in dreams may serve as an illustration of a fatal evil in our waking, responsible being. In dreams the mind is intensely active, and has the most vivid ideas passing through it; but there is a temporary suspension of the mechanism which connects the will with the vital powers, so that no action follows, nor can any control be exercised over the mind or body. It is possible that, in like manner, an illuminated intellect may have vivid ideas of Catholic doctrine, while from moral defects there is a suspension of the power of the will, and no corresponding result ensues. The man may know all mysteries, but their legitimate influence is stayed by some defects of his spiritual life. He may be a speculator, and limit his efforts to specu-

lation ; or he may be a controversialist, a warm disciple of one of the contending schools, but yet never kneel in fervent prayer before his FATHER, “ Who seeth in secret,” nor ask of Him for light to see how the doctrine, if it be really true, should influence his spiritual life, and be embodied in his renewed nature. It is a fearful contrast between an illuminated intellect and an unspiritual and careless morality.

May it not even be that the greater the truth, and the keener the perception of it, the less on that very account may be its influence ? Its very greatness may cause the soul to be so absorbed, so excited, so carried away by the very fulness of its convictions, so eager to defend them, that it fails to watch, fails to consider the practical points in which the doctrine is to be applied. The soul is too limited, too feeble to take in both ideas, to attend at the same time to the accuracy of the doctrine and the correctness of the practice,—to contemplate the grandeur, the blessedness of the truth, and also to discipline the details of life into its likeness. S. James warns against this deceit, when he describes a man looking into “ the perfect law of liberty,” as one who “ beholdeth his natural face in a glass,” but “ goeth away and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”¹ So may the picture of Divine Truth, on which the soul rejoices to dwell, pass utterly away from the conscience, when a sudden temptation has troubled the calmness of the mind, and inflamed its passions.

2. Again, we here learn a rule for our devotions. If our devotions tend to earnest practical aspirations as their aim, they will act upon our lives ; and

¹ S. James i. 23.

the reverse is equally true. Consider the application of this law in the case of meditation. It is a vitally important rule in meditation, to close with some practical resolution. The danger is, lest meditation become mere reverie, or indulgence of the spirit enchanted by its illuminations, roaming amidst mysteries, and delighting itself in the intense interest and beauties of heavenly revelations, but ending only in vague feelings, or shadowy aspirations. The only profitable end of a meditation is the increase of deepened affections, or more practical efforts,—the power to go forth to live a more earnest life. This is what is meant, when it is said, that obedience is better than prayer. It is not meant to place anything in contrast with prayer, as though anything could be greater than the soul's communion with God; but that obedience is prayer in practice, or meditation embodied in act, or contemplation realised in living deeds. Obedience is greater than prayer, because it is prayer and something more than prayer; it is dutifulness added to devotion. To make the life thus obedient, thus active in holiness, it is of importance to make the prayer, the meditation ever converge and end in the reality of some practical design, some more real purpose for God, some more earnest effort of self-discipline. To pray or meditate without a practical aim, is to separate the truth from the life, to make religion a theory or a dream, not a law of obedience.

3. A warning needs to be given to those who, by the grace of God, are drawn to an earnest self-devotion after a sinful or careless life. The graces of a saintly character grow less quickly than the

convictions of truth. The mind becomes impressed with the illuminations of the SPIRIT more readily than the moral character and temper is transformed. The want of a full appreciation of this fact and its bearing on the inner life, is often a cause of despondency, especially to young converts. They have embraced eagerly some high views of doctrine, and are enraptured by the revelation of the truth which they have apprehended; or, after years of sin, they have experienced deep convictions; have made, it may be, an earnest confession, and in the blessedness of entire forgiveness sealed to the soul's unutterable joy, have devoted themselves ardently to a newness of life. But soon again former temptations strive to re-assert their power, old sins begin to revive, and the same features of evil in some degree re-appear. They are startled, as though all their better purposes were unreal. They thought that, with the entranced joy of the new deep truth, with the ardour of their conversion, the evil power, as well as the guilt, of sins formerly committed, would have wholly passed away. They are tempted to doubt the truth of their convictions, the reality of their penitence, and are then exposed to the risk of a recklessness which may be the beginning even of a worse state than the first. The cause of the evil lies, not in unreality of purpose or of grace, nor in any peculiar strangeness of trial, but simply in the feebleness of soul, common to all, which is incapable of attaining in its practical life, except by slow degrees, and after many failures, the due results of the spiritual truths which by the grace of God have been embraced. Their influences can but slowly win their way; it is only by patient continu-

ance in well-doing, disciplining ourselves in the minutest details of a continual conflict between the old and the new life, that we are enabled in any degree to "seek for honour, glory, and immortality."

It is not that sanctity is uncertain, or the results of the grace of God and His truth less real than our natural corruption, but that the noblest plants are of slowest growth, and the consequences of our fall remain to trouble us in the course of our repentance, as a penance ordained to be borne for awhile, it may be for humiliation, or in order to work the truth more deeply into the conscience, or to cause the penitent better to appreciate the grace given, or for some unknown necessity attached to the progress of a moral responsible being, some sad result of our fall, so that we are doomed to "eat" even the "bread" of life "in the sweat of our brow."

4. Once more; be diligent and watchful concerning the lesser facts of daily life, and not merely its greater trials. The greater trials are occasional efforts, the smaller trials are the life itself. The smaller trials make up the general tissue, the occasional efforts are but as threads shot through the web. Sanctity is shown in the general tone of the character, rather than in the occasional efforts of the soul; in the ordinary, rather than the extraordinary points of the life. There is a liability to self-deceit in the case of the greater, which hardly applies to the lesser efforts of life. In the greater efforts there is often much of mere natural energy, roused by the greatness of the occasion, and adding its force to grace. In the commonplace routine of daily incidents, in which there is no excitement,

the natural energy is liable to collapse and become inert. There is, therefore, a more real, a well as a more continued testing of the living grace of the soul in the one, than in the other. The man is what he ordinarily is, not what he is on forced occasions. The character of the man is the component result of the manifold little traits, the multitudinous sensations, words, impulses, acts, and prevailing thoughts, which form habits day by day, each day adding a little to the growing texture of the soul in its onward advance towards the perfect development of the spiritual life. Our LORD evidently speaks in the text of sanctifying the whole person of the man, not merely nerving and strengthening him to meet certain specific trials. As no one can be a scholar by getting up the more difficult passages, and overlooking the multiform little details of scholarship; so the life can never possess a character of saintliness if it be confined to earnest efforts on certain great and grave occasions, and is lax, unwatchful and undisciplined in the common details of a daily conversation. As "he that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little," so he alone that labours to conform himself to the will of GOD in the constant claims of every-day life, shall rise by little and little to his consummation of bliss in his predestined union with GOD.

50. 13. 11. 13.

SERMON X.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE TRUTH.

ACTS I. 21, 22.

“WHEREFORE OF THESE MEN WHICH HAVE COMPANIED WITH US ALL THE TIME THAT THE LORD JESUS WENT IN AND OUT AMONG US, BEGINNING FROM THE BAPTISM OF JOHN, UNTO THAT SAME DAY THAT HE WAS TAKEN UP FROM US, MUST ONE BE ORDAINED TO BE A WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

THE lot which fell on S. Matthias has an eventful bearing on the whole history of the Church. He was chosen under circumstances differing from those which marked the choice of the Eleven, into whose company he was introduced. The Eleven were chosen by our LORD Himself, according to His own inscrutable will, no reason for His choice being given. S. Matthias was chosen after His visible Presence was withdrawn, and because of a peculiar fitness, the grounds of which are recorded.

The Church had now passed into a phase unlike what is described in the holy Gospels, a state similar to our own. The mystical Body of CHRIST, in which invisibly He was to abide through the SPIRIT, was being formed, and the new creation of grace,

which was to continue to the end preparing the way for His second coming, had commenced. The principles therefore which determined the choice of S. Matthias, have their application in our own day, and may be regarded as an expression of the mind of GOD to guide the Church in all her after course.

It is not to be supposed that S. Matthias was chosen, as the words if only superficially viewed might seem to imply, merely because he was able to give ocular testimony to the fact of our LORD's Resurrection. To suppose this, would be to reduce the grandeur of the Apostolic Mission to the bare record of an historical witness, to make them mere annalists of certain eventful facts. The very words themselves lead us beyond such a supposition; for if an Apostle's office were only to be a competent witness of the Resurrection, it would have been sufficient to have seen our LORD before His Crucifixion, so as to be able to identify His risen Body. But the distinguishing characteristic of S. Matthias was, that he "had companied with them *all the time* that the LORD JESUS had gone in and out among them, beginning from the Baptism of John." What need of so long a fellowship merely to certify our LORD's identity? The words prove, that his long and constant communion with our LORD was the condition on which his election turned, that the spiritual illuminations and perceptions of the saintly life, which during that communion he had received, constituted his fitness. His commission was indeed to be a witness of the fact of the Resurrection itself, but not of the Resurrection only, rather of the entire mystery of invisible things of which the Resurrection was the seal. The Resur-

rection *life* was impressed on the soul of S. Matthias through long familiarity with the Person, the Acts, the Mind of CHRIST, and this constituted him a fit recipient of the full revelation of the Truth.

The Eleven, though chosen according to the secret purpose of GOD, as it seemed without any previous preparation, were equally trained through the same continual intercourse with our LORD, before they received the full inspiration of the SPIRIT, and their Apostolic commission was sealed upon them. S. Paul, though as an Apostle "born out of due time," was nevertheless fitted for his office by the same means. He asserts this characteristic mark of his calling, when, urging his claim to the obedience of the disciple, he says; "Have I not seen JESUS CHRIST our LORD?"¹ These words imply more than the mere ocular proof of our LORD's existence, which he had when he saw Him by the way in the hour of his conversion. S. Paul had also in his mind, we can hardly doubt, his intercourse with our LORD during his retirement in Arabia,² and the glory which had been spread before his eyes, when "he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."³ These later manifestations, specially vouchsafed to S. Paul, seem to have been the compensation for his loss of the previous communion with our LORD in the days of His Flesh, which had been the distinguishing privilege of the other Apostles. Thus all were alike prepared for the full reception of the truth through the same gracious influence, their souls being transformed into a supernatural state by the virtue continually flowing out from our

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 1.² Gal. i. 17.³ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

LORD, and pervading them in their intercourse with Him. All objects thenceforth appeared to them under the aspect of this spiritual illumination. Doctrines and Sacraments, moral duties and social ties, the relation of man to man, and of man to GOD, lived in their consciousness in the amazing light of that new world which had opened before their eyes, and they could testify of all things in the power of the SPIRIT, as seen in that inner sphere of being which had become their abiding life.

The mental condition of inspired men seems always to have influenced their reception of truth, and to have given their form and expression to the operations of the SPIRIT Who illuminated them. The prophecies of the Seers of Israel took the shape of their own past training. Daniel, trained in the court of Babylon, expressed the mind of God in images drawn from Eastern kingdoms and the gorgeous symbols of their ancient idolatries. Ezekiel, a Priest, unfolded the Divine Revelation by means of images impressed on his mind during his ministry in the Temple. Amos, a herdsman, clothed the burden of his prophecy in scenes drawn from country life. The HOLY GHOST acts by the same law in each separate case. He adapts His Presence to the forms familiar to the minds of His servants, making the past experience of the Prophet the basis on which He builds up within his soul the fabric of His revelations.

A similar law affected the Apostles. Their minds moulded through long familiarity with the life of our LORD, and the unseen world ever manifesting itself through Him, and thus possessed with a deep

abiding consciousness of its reality, its truth, its surpassing majesty and beauty, were prepared to become, as it were, the substratum on which the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Passion and the Indwelling of the HOLY GHOST might take the form of human language, and be accommodated to the apprehensions of other men. Their intense perception of the inner life of the truth enabled them both to receive and to communicate its mysteries in clear dogmatic forms, and thus to be the fittest teachers of mankind.

Moreover we here see one secret of the super-human strength which sustained the Apostles in the fiery trials through which they were destined to pass. There is not in history any nobler scene of moral heroism than when, after a miracle which they had worked, the Apostles were brought before the Sanhedrim, and it was resolved by the Court; "That it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this Name. And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all, or to teach in the Name of the LORD JESUS. Then Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you, rather than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard and seen." The rest of the disciples, whom they immediately joined, were roused by their example to the same calm unshaken trust; "Being let go, they went to their own company, and repeated all that the Chief Priests and Elders had said unto them. And when they heard that, they

lifted up their voice to GOD with one accord, and said, LORD, Thou art GOD, Which hast made heaven and earth, and all that in them is.”¹ They stand forth in the face of all who resisted them, in the simple grandeur of an unshaken confidence in the invisible realities which by faith they had embraced. When it is considered that this same spirit manifested itself in the Apostles throughout their whole lives, year after year, in all scenes, under all changes, what a magnificent picture of spiritual strength and calmness do they display! This greatness, which awed and overcame the world, was not the result of inspiration, or what is generally known as the extraordinary power of grace: it is traced by the Apostles themselves to the ordinary working of the SPIRIT of GOD through their deep convictions, and long experience of the mysteries of the heavenly life of which they spake. “For GOD,” says S. Paul, “Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST. For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of GOD, and not of us;”² and therefore, he adds, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.”³ Again, “our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of GOD, we have had our conversation in the world.”⁴ And again; “For which cause we faint not, for though

¹ Acts iv. 17, 24.² 2 Cor. iv. 6.³ 2 Cor. iv. 8.⁴ 2 Cor. i. 12.

our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."¹ They speak in such passages only as other Christians may speak, of powers and motives of grace, vouchsafed to all the faithful. They were strong, not because of any secret possession peculiar to them as Apostles, but simply because the mysteries of another world, closing in around them, had become an abiding vision, and issued, through their faithfulness to the work of grace within them, in a consistent conformity of thought and act which was above the world. They had therefore in all their bearing a singleness, an ease, a dignity, an energy, before which the powers of this lower world gave way. They thus acted and suffered, because they lived and moved in the realities of an inner creation, which imparted its own colour and tone to all their views and judgments. But this grace and power was independent of their special gift as Apostles, and was promised to abide in the Church for ever.

This aspect of the lives of the Apostles bears on our own history. We are too apt to look on the life depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, as a kind of heroic form of Christianity, which has passed away; and that we have inherited only the possibilities of a lower state more accommodated to the actual circumstances of modern society. Such

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

a supposition is fatal to all high sanctity or real faithfulness. Moreover, it is to mistake the very meaning and object of the Acts of the Apostles. The Gospels indeed belong to a sphere of life above our own experience, because God Himself is there manifest in the flesh, and His life there portrayed, though the model which we are continually to imitate, is nevertheless in its fulness beyond our possible attainment. But in the Acts of the Apostles we behold the Church in its abiding form, as it arose through the Indwelling of the HOLY GHOST, and as it was promised to continue through the grace of His unfailing Presence even to the end. As the order of the Church, the election of Pastors, the assembling of Councils, rules of service and forms of Sacraments, find their original patterns in the records of those early ages, so in like manner the conditions of the spiritual life, the training and preparations of heart which at that time fitted the soul to receive the mysteries of the revelation of CHRIST, are types to be for ever reproduced in every successive age of the Church. Thus the principles which determined the choice of S. Matthias to take the place of the lost Apostle, are equally applicable now as then, although the outward circumstances of his training were peculiar to himself and his fellow Apostles. What he obtained by the familiar sight of our LORD manifest in the flesh, is now to be apprehended by faith in an unseen Presence, and a similar influence through the sanctifying grace of the HOLY GHOST is as possible now, raising and purifying the inner perceptions and consciousness of the soul to prepare it for the revelations of the Divine mysteries.

In order rightly to apprehend the doctrines of the faith, there is needed some previous experience of their living power in the soul. Dogmatic truth cannot be manifested in a mere form of words, or be separated from the habitual tenour of the life. There is, so to speak, a co-ordinate relation between the truths received and the organs of reception in the spiritual, as in the natural world. The facts of outward nature are manifested to the senses. Intellectual truths are revealed to the intellect. According to the same law, spiritual realities can be apprehended only by the illuminated spirit. Spiritual minds only can receive spiritual doctrines. Divine realities require a sympathy in the receiver's spiritual experience. A previous training, rendering the soul familiar with the features and tone of a personal holy life, with some actual embodiment of living grace, is the fittest preparation for the teaching of the SPIRIT. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual, judgeth all things."¹

Hence it is that untrained minds are generally wanting in the perception of a true balance of doctrine, or in apprehending the analogies of the faith. Chastened and religious minds on the contrary have within themselves an instinctive power of adjusting the various portions of the truth, a key which opens their hidden meanings and mutual relations, so as to advance gradually and surely by a perpetual increase towards the clear understanding of the revealed mind of God. They who have been suddenly

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

converted, or whose earlier course has been marred by irregularities, find great difficulty in perceiving these bearings of doctrine, or in entering at all into the profounder mysteries of the faith.

Hence too it is that deep spiritual truth can never become popular. The deeper and more mysterious any doctrine is, the more certainly will it either provoke general opposition, or be ignored as unreal, simply because the necessary condition of spiritual sympathy is wanting. There is no inward experience to bring to bear upon the doctrine in question, and consequently there is no capacity of judgment. The prevailing worldliness of the popular mind hinders its spiritual discernment, and always tends to depress religious truth to its own level. How remarkable it is that an age which has had the wisdom to reject all authority in political or scientific thought, except that which grows out of the inductions of a real experience, should test religious truth by such a different standard. Who would now accept a mere theoretical dogma on any momentous point; not because theory is unreal, but because no theory can be seen aright except in the light of actual practice? Yet how different is the estimate that is generally formed of the capacity and conditions for testing the doctrine of CHRIST. Men avowedly devoid of personal religious experience, pronounce as though they were Apostles of the powers and realities of the spiritual world, and the laws which govern the lives of the Saints.

How do men speak, e.g., of the blessed mystery of the real Presence of the Holy Eucharist, without any habitual training which would prepare them at all to apprehend the ineffable and inconceivable

nearness of God, or the supernatural life invisibly present in outward forms? Or how can any one hope to judge aright of the doctrine of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and reconcile it with the fulness of the all-sufficient Atonement of the Cross, unless he has in some degree realized the union through the SPIRIT abiding in the Church of the visible and invisible worlds, and is thus prepared to understand how the oblation in the Heavens and the oblations on the Altar may be brought by His operations into a mysterious supernatural unity? Or again, is it possible that there should be any readiness to enter into the grace of absolution, except in the case of one who has sorrowed under the burden of sin, and found peace in the assurance, that "the Blood of JESUS CHRIST" not only will cleanse hereafter, but even now and here "cleanseth us from all sin," any more than one untrained by early devotion can really apprehend the increase of the HOLY GHOST given in the sacramental rite of Confirmation? It is not that the mind, however illuminated, can of itself develop doctrine, or that religious truth has only a subjective reality, and is but the creation of thought, and therefore differs to every man according to his education or previous guiding. Truth exists external to, and independent of the mind of man. But the power of apprehension varies in different minds, and spiritual-mindedness is one main condition on which the power depends. Nor is it meant, that all who are equally spiritual will perceive the truth of God under the same aspect, or that unity in the faith will be necessarily the result of equal righteousness of life. There are in our present state manifold disturbing causes, con-

spiring to promote diversity of views even in those who are living for the same objects. But amid all diversities of opinion it remains true, that no portion of the revelation of God can be really apprehended, or have a living existence to the soul, unless it be spiritually discerned.

They who canvass the doctrines of the Church of God should test well their qualifications to judge, not merely from the claim of knowledge, but also according to the law which S. John declares to have been one ground of authority in the teaching of Apostles; "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen It, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the FATHER, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."¹ What a stress does S. John here lay on personal inward experience, on the felt value of the spiritual realities of which he speaks! True, he speaks in his own case, and that of the Apostles, of a sensible vision, a sensible touch, a visible manifestation, a personal intercourse, such as we cannot as yet know; but faith is to the illuminated a second sight. There is a hearing, a sight, a touch of faith, which is "the substance," or substantial existence, "of things hoped for, the evidence," or verification, "of things not seen."² There is an inner life within all creeds and sacraments, and wherever this inner life finds no corresponding sense, a veil is on the heart,

¹ 1 S. John i. 1.

² Heb. xi. 1.

though the lips may utter the most precise dogmatic statements.

The Apostles fulfilled their mission, not merely because they were inspired men, but because they had a life in themselves, a clear inner light of the indwelling Spirit of holiness, a living world of personal experience corresponding to the truths revealed to them. This law of spiritual life universally prevails. As the lights of heaven, the shape and movement of the clouds, come down and reflect themselves in the waters which spread their broad bosom beneath, calm and clear, but the power of reflection is lost when the waters are dark and troubled; even so the mysteries of the new Creation, the new heavens and the new earth, reflect their forms in the soul of man only in proportion as the conscience is clear, and the spirit is lit up with the holy light of faith and love, in quiet communion with God.

It is not meant that the contemplative life is necessary to the apprehension of revealed truth. The discipline of active life, of toil and sorrow, of pain and self-sacrifice, through the grace of God sanctifying the soul, cherishes and deepens the purer light to which mysteries are revealed. The promise is given to meekness and gentleness; "Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle them shall He learn His way."¹ It is the blessing assured to a holy fear; "The secret of the LORD is among them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant."² It is the result of a true obedience; "Ye have purified your

¹ Ps. xxv. 8.

² Ps. xxv. 13.

souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.”¹ Our LORD Himself gave His own sure promise to the grace of an obedient will; “My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will” to “do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of Myself.”² Again, that this grace is given as a peculiar prerogative to the unassuming, unaffected lowliness of a childlike simplicity, our LORD bore His own remarkable witness; “I thank Thee, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, that” although “Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent,” yet “Thou hast revealed them unto babes.”³ And this same grace must attach to love; for “whoso dwelleth in love, dwelleth in GOD, and GOD in him,”⁴ and this mutual indwelling in the Source of light must be light, as it is written; “In Thy light shall we see light.”⁵ Truth is thus revealed to the inner spiritual sense chastened and purified, even in the case of the most unlearned, in those to whom meditation as a science is impossible, by a practical holy discipline, a divine instinct being formed, through which “even wayfaring men though fools, shall not err.”⁶

The following simple rules will by the grace of GOD tend to cherish this pure inner light, on which the increase of spiritual perception depends.

Fill up some of the vacant spaces of the day with recurring ejaculatory prayers. We are more responsible for the use of our vacant, than of our more

¹ 1 S. Pet. i. 22.

² S. John vii. 16, 17.

³ S. Matt. xi. 25.

⁴ 1 S. John iv. 16.

⁵ Ps. xxxvi. 9.

⁶ Isa. xxxv. 8.

serious hours ; for thought is more dependent on our own will, when no constraining outward call binds us. If the habit of ejaculatory prayer is formed, the aspiration will vary according to the object at heart, whether there be an affection to be cherished, a grace to be obtained or matured, a sin to be overcome, a danger to be guarded against, a trial to be more patiently borne. But in every case, it is equally a breathing of the soul's desire towards God, and thus a link that binds it more closely to Him, opening to further communications of His love. Whenever alone, when disengaged, the opportunity for such communion is come, and the soul may then at once inwardly retire and be with God. Or at all times, even in most pressing occupations, in the midst of the crowd, still the soul may thus continually retreat into the Presence of God, and breathe out to Him its secret desires.

Again, practise contemplation in some form, however simple. Be not deterred by its difficulties, or by repeated failures. The power of contemplation grows by use. It may be begun by only musing on a text of Scripture or a passage in a religious book, as a child might ponder on some mystery. Many may never pass beyond this simplest exercise, yet it may have all the life and unction of a studied meditation. Or the practice may grow into a more fixed and definite form, and embrace in successive exercises all the dogmas of the faith, all the graces of the life of God and experiences of the soul.

Again, study Holy Scripture at times in prayer on your knees. The whole aspect of Holy Scripture varies according to the mind with which it is viewed. There is within it a life and power, which,

like GOD Himself, is hidden except in answer to prayer. Scripture unfolds its mysteries through the grace of the HOLY GHOST Who gave it. He imparts or withholds His own secret meaning as He will, and inner lights and inspirations break forth through His words to bless and gladden the eyes of those who thus seek to know His mind more and more perfectly. The words of the Scriptures are as points of light radiating in all directions, and with manifold bearings beyond their first simple application, with messages from GOD to souls which are open to receive them. As the words of S. Paul, when heard by Lydia,¹ “whose heart the LORD opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of” him, bore with them a fuller deeper application, than when they fell upon the ears of others who heard only with the natural intellect; even so all the words which holy men have spoken, as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST, carry with them convictions and intimations of supernatural revelations, varying according as the inward heart listens, or is closed to, the silent teaching of the Spirit opening His mind to “all them that wait for Him.”

Again, learn to view all acts, all words and thoughts, as they will appear at the Day of Judgment; not according to present circumstances or opinions and customs of men, but as they live under the searching gaze of Him, “Whose eyes are as a flame of fire.” Such a habit not only enables us best to see the extent of our sin, and guards us against judging by an imperfect standard of human life; it also tends to bring our mind into harmony

¹ Acts xvi. 14.

with the mind of GOD, and thus prepares us better to understand His secret truth.

Again, beware of a religion which depends on ardent impulses, or occasional efforts. Recollectedness and a sustained consciousness of invisible things are essential to a steadfast communion with GOD, and only in proportion as such communion grows and deepens, is the soul trained to apprehend the fulness of Divine knowledge. The growth of our intellectual faculties, which depends on steadfast and continual progress, is a type of true spiritual training. "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."² "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."³ All speaks of gradual progress and onward growth. The developments of the spirit and its illuminations by the gifts of heavenly wisdom, are then truest, when they advance gradually towards maturity. An intermittent, impulsive faith, even if true, suffers loss which may never be repaired, and is marred by grievous imperfections which seem to cling hopelessly to the soul to the end of its earthly probation.

It is not merely for the sake of the soul's progress during its earthly probation that we need spiritual training. The preparations of the heart in this life tell on all our future destiny. S. John reveals the eventful truth, that we shall continue to increase in the likeness to our LORD after death, and that our future advancement in His likeness

¹ Isa. xxviii. 10.

² Prov. iv. 18.

³ S. Mark iv. 28.

depends on our previous preparation on earth. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure;"¹ purifieth himself here, in order to be perfectly like to our LORD hereafter. The purity which will fit us to grow into the full likeness of the adorable Vision we shall then behold, is prepared here, is growing onward even now in the true elect, and their future more matured growth into His perfected life will be the consequence of their earthly discipline, the crowning glory of the incipient sanctity slowly and painfully nurtured here. Our life is one. There is a substantial identity between what we are and what we shall be. The being of the man depends on the training of the boy. The links between the two stages are certain, however difficult to trace. And according to a similar law of cause and effect, the life on earth bears its results in the life beyond the grave. We may be saved, and yet the life may for ever suffer from lack of a sufficient earthly training of the saintly spirit. The soul may be with God, blessed, for ever to rejoice, and yet it may not be all that it would have been, had the capacity for the greater measure of glory been more carefully sought. We may be in God, yet not all that He had purposed that we should be. A higher purity attained here, would have prepared the way for a fuller assimilation to the sacred Humanity of the Eternal SON of God, fuller because of the greater

¹ 1 S. John iii. 2, 3.

element of fitness to receive the increase of the Divine gift.

O glorious Vision, before Which in the appointed Day we shall, if found faithful, stand entranced, adoring, with every longing of our perfected faculties quickened into intensest desire for ever growing conformity to the Divine Nature, ever through advancing ages more and more revealing Itself! O Love and Bliss of GOD, surpassing all thought of Thy creatures, which Thou hast willed that we should share with Thyself in the Only-Begotten, the Beloved, draw us now towards Thee with the attractions of Thy heavenly Beauty, and bind us to Thyself, that we may not through our present infirmity, through sloth or faithlessness, fail to attain in this our earthly course the preparation of heart which Thou hast promised to bless with the fulness of the glory that fadeth not away for ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

OBJECTIVE FAITH.

REV. I. 13.

“AND IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS
ONE LIKE UNTO THE SON OF MAN.”

IN the Book of the Revelations, the veil that separates the invisible from the visible world is lifted up. The Revelations are indeed a series of symbolic visions, for such is the only method by which the invisible can as yet be revealed to our eyes; but they are revelations of real conditions of the Church of God; they are symbols expressive of actual realities, true as the Gospel histories are true. The Gospels reveal the Presence of JESUS CHRIST in the Flesh in visible form. The Revelations open to us the same Presence to be realised under consecrated symbols. As surely as the SON of GOD was revealed on the Sea of Galilee, or the Mount of Olives, or in the valley of Gethsemane, so is He revealed in the mystical scenes which S.

¹ This Sermon, preached at the anniversary of the consecration of S. Matthias, Stoke Newington, in 1856, is reprinted with only some changes of expression.

John has recorded as descriptive of the present being of the Church. There is a veil cast over Him, but He is Himself there. There was a veil of the Flesh between the Godhead and human eyes in the days of His humiliation. There is of necessity a more mysterious veiling of His Presence now that He has assumed the Flesh into the glory of His Divinity; but all is equally real and true. We lose sight of our LORD, as we stand on the Mount of Olives on the day of His Ascension. He returns to our view again under another form, as we open the Book of the Revelations. It is the same LORD on the same earth, only the mystery is changed. He fills our gaze as He moves through the Holy Land, the One Form on Whom all eyes are bent; the Life of the Gospels. He fills our gaze again, as we look out upon the far wider scene that spreads before us in the visions of S. John; Himself is still the One Presence that pervades them, the Life that lives in all.

I say a far wider scene; for in the days of His humiliation His Presence was confined to His own Person. In the vision of the "seven golden candlesticks," we are looking on the vast expanse of the Catholic Church; for the seven candlesticks are explained in the last verse of the chapter to be "the seven Churches;" and seven being in sacred computation the perfect number, the entire Church Catholic is meant, as "the seven lamps burning before the Throne" are the sevenfold Spirit of God. As we look over this vast expanse, His Presence is seen unfolding Itself—"in the midst," not in the centre only, expanding throughout every part; and the Presence, "One like unto the Son of Man;"

the Same that S. John had so often seen before, yet different; the same loved features, yet changed, because hidden now within the screen of the mystery of the spiritual world. S. John's illuminated gaze, in the revelations that followed, foresaw the progress of the Church of God, its changes, its expansion, its trials, its divisions, its glory, its shame; and as he gazed, within this ever-shifting scene, that Divine Presence was ever moving still, filling the whole sphere of the vision, Itself the Life of the vision. It must have recalled to S. John the Divine promise, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."¹

Here then, we have a subject which seems naturally to fall in with the object of this day's celebration, for what can be more harmonious with the idea of commemorating the foundation of this Church, than such a subject as the words of the text open to us? This beautiful house of prayer is one of the many practical witnesses raised up in the midst of us to the depth and fervour of Catholic principles and the richness of the services of the Church, and the text brings out to view one of the great truths which is essential to such revivals of the Church's spiritual life.

If it were asked to fix upon the most prominent want in the spiritual life of the present time, we might perhaps not untruly say, that it is the want of objective faith. We fail to grasp the realities of the spiritual world, and live in shadows. Visions pass before us, and we believe that in them is our

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

life, but where is the entranced consciousness of their reality? Where is the abiding feeling of their substance, their power? We try to stir up suitable feelings, as we contemplate the objects of our faith, but it is an effort, and we soon sink back to the ordinary level. Where is the soul that lives in those invisible realities; loses itself in the contemplation of them? Where is the fresh warm faith which ever sees One like unto the Son of Man, moving amid sacraments, and taking the shape of human symbols? Where is the rapturous conviction that pierces at once through the veil of visions, and sees the well-known Features by a perpetual inspiration?

And yet, this is undeniably the character of the faith which has drawn the soul to GOD at all times. It drew the soul to Him in days of heathen ignorance. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." It drew the soul to GOD in patriarchal times; for "they all, having received the promises, saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Abraham seeing the day of CHRIST and being glad, Moses enduring, "as seeing Him who is invisible," are but instances of an unvarying law of life. The same living view of the great visions of faith drew the soul to GOD in the days of His manifestation in the flesh. Nathaniel's startled consciousness of Him Who saw him under the fig-tree, Whom afterwards he never left;—S. Peter's terrified sense of guilt in the Holy Presence, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O GOD," which grew and deep-

ened by years ;—Mary's choice of "the good part," losing all thought of earthly necessities in the feeling of having all in having Him, at Whose feet she sat ;—the poor diseased woman's certainty of being healed in clasping the hem of His garment, in Whom she had learnt to see the Source of life ;—the tranquil restfulness of the Apostles amidst all who doubted and the many going away, in the thought, "LORD, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life :"—S. John feeding his soul in love as he lay on His bosom ;—the perfect satisfaction of all doubts, and the understanding of all prophecies, by the two desponding disciples of Emmaus, in His sudden revealing of Himself in "the breaking of the bread,"—these are but instances of an universal truth, how life hangs on the convictions of an objective faith, on realising with absorbed consciousness, by a faith which is "the evidence of things not seen," the Invisible Presence in the midst of visible forms.

And it was to perpetuate this life of faith, that in the Revelations our LORD chose symbols wherein to enshrine His Presence. He thus mercifully assists us still to realise His Form in mysteries, in which alone we can as yet see Him move. We can better understand from such symbols, how in the ministries of the Church He is still present ; how in benedictions and absolutions He still speaks ; how in the "laying on of hands" He covers the defenceless head. What blessed the eyes of S. John was not a vision which then fulfilled its end, to be looked back upon as a past historical fact : it was an abiding truth, that explained the unchanging mystery of the inward life of the Church. For what is

described in the vision of the text, is shortly afterwards expressed as a perpetual attribute, a constant designation of the Son of Man. "These things saith He, Who walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks;" as if it were now His habitual state, His new form of being: the Name by which He is thenceforth to be known; that now He is no more seen walking to and fro in the Holy Land, but in the midst of His own mystical Body; that now we should know Him no more in the flesh, but as One clothed in mysteries, as One touching and being touched in the manifold ministrings of His Church.

Let us consider some of the practical bearings of this law of spiritual life.

1. The symbolic visions of the Revelations are an argument in favour of the sacramental teaching of the Church, of the system which represents sacraments as outward forms containing and conveying grace. If our LORD after His Ascension appeared and spoke to S. John on earth, through the means of visible symbols; why should we not believe that He holds personal communion with us through the outward forms of sacraments which He Himself instituted? If the one was according to His will, why not the other? It was our very LORD Himself, not a mere figurative representation of One absent, Who was holding communion with S. John, illuminating his soul with Divine truth. Why not also by a personal Presence convey His grace through sacramental symbols? He has promised to be with us "always, even unto the end of the world." He ordained Sacraments as the special means of communicating Himself. The vision revealed to

S. John was temporary, His sacramental Presence is perpetual. But both alike are under outward forms. There is, indeed, a teaching current and popular among us, which tells of Baptism as no more than giving a claim to subsequent privileges ; of Eucharists which are but remembrances of love shown eighteen hundred years ago ; of absolutions which only declare promises to be fulfilled at the last day ; of an altar without a priest and without a sacrifice ; of a ministry of reconciliation, which cannot be authoritatively applied on earth. It puts great words into our mouth, and then tells us that they are beautiful metaphors, apt figures of things which are very far away.

The teaching of the Church, on the other hand, is founded on the belief in a mystery ever more and more unfolding itself before us,—a Presence unseen, but verily and indeed in the midst of us. It tells us of a regeneration, which is the real imparting of a new nature ; of a confirmation, in which the HOLY SPIRIT descends and rests upon us ; of a Eucharistic Sacrifice, wherein we may still adore the LAMB of GOD mystically, but really, offered before us ; of absolutions in which He speaks effectual pardon through the voice of man. It introduces us at our new birth into a mysterious and supernatural life, and this beginning advances on into an ever-deepening union with our LORD, giving Himself to us through His own ordained means more and more, and abiding with us, and working in us His manifold gifts of grace till we are transformed into the likeness of the Presence before Which we bow and adore.

The visions of invisible things become palpable

to the soul, aided by the outward symbol, in a way that is not possible to a mere subjective faith. Meditations, communings with our own hearts in our chambers when we are still, musings as we kneel before the altar—have in them a greater nearness and assurance of God, and a greater definiteness, as the soul sustains its feeble powers of spiritual apprehension by the outward means which He has consecrated to represent Himself. Confessions of sin are more truly anticipations of the searching of the last day, because more under the immediate Eye of God. The Divine Service corresponds more with the worship of Heaven, when felt to be offered before the visible shrine of His Presence. He has mercifully identified Himself with visible signs, and the visible signs become in return the aids of faith, sustainers of the thoughtful mind which aspires to an ever-growing habit of contemplation. The consequence of a mere subjective faith, on the other hand, is to cast the soul upon itself, to see God only in what it believes to be His work within itself, in experiences and sensations which tend to encourage a subtle self-complacency, exalting, rather than humbling the soul even in His Presence. The thought of God thus seen through the soul's fluctuating feelings, as the only test and sign of His Presence, is liable to the sad alternations of spiritual presumption and despair, God being felt to be present or absent, favourable or adverse, only according to the varying assurance or despondency of the mind itself.

Again, as objective faith is the means of sustaining the spiritual life, so is it the true antidote of

one of the greatest dangers which beset the soul in times of strong religious excitement,—that of morbid self-contemplation. Remorse, terror of conscience, growing scrupulousness, deepening awe at the sanctities of religion, even increased communions increasing fear,—all tend to fix the eye of the awakened soul on itself, in a minutely introspective anxious study, which tends to doubt and alarm, and sometimes more sadly still, depressing the soul's energies, creates fresh hindrances to restoration and to peace. The soul is encumbered with itself, moving perpetually in the same circle of oft-repeated sins. It can never spring upward. It cannot take courage. It knows not what hope means. It looks upon rejoicing in the LORD as a state belonging only to the Apostolic, or the martyrs' age. It keeps a perpetual Lent, and finds no response with the Church's Easter-tide, or the gladness of the Ascension. Self is intensified, though it may have assumed a religious form. And yet for the soul to leave off its earnest self-examination, its watchfulness; to cease its inward musings, its struggles with itself,—can this be the better way? Surely not. The remedy is to be found in an objective faith. The thought of the love of CHRIST is the counteracting stay. Combine with the care of the soul a yet deeper care to realise the Presence of Him in Whom it lives. The soul looks safely on itself, if it look still more earnestly on its GOD. The one vision is the true complement of the other. They are the two forces by which the inner life is guided right; but missing either, it wanders from its true end. Without self-knowledge we cannot understand GOD, and without knowing GOD, self-

knowledge is only the increase of temptation. S. Peter could not have recognised his LORD, had he not first known his own sinfulness; but when he had sinned, he would have been overwhelmed with despair, had he not seen the Countenance Which turned and looked upon him. The vision of sin is depressing to the soul, and is a perpetual snare. Looking upon it destroys the power of overcoming it. It is so dreadful in its influence, that the very consciousness of having sinned inclines to sin. This is the reason why innocence was man's only true safety; why ignorance is bliss. What innocence would have been to us, as a guard against sin, *that* now we gain by looking on our LORD, losing oneself in Him, covering one's own uncleanness with the secret mystery of His Holy Presence. Even confession is the darkness of despair, unless His love touch the soul. It is the same in the whole course of the daily life; the soul sinks in the contemplation of its daily faults, unless it stay itself on the sight of Him in Whom its iniquity is pardoned. Satan drives us to despair, or besets us with scruples, or clouds us with perpetual fears. Our safety is to lose our own consciousness in the greater consciousness of the unseen world. Our tendency is to move in a miserable circle about ourselves. Our remedy is to rise by meditation and a sustained effort of earnest faith into a higher atmosphere, where self is lost in the transcendent glories which are around the throne of God.

Once more, the same truth holds good as to our progress in any single grace. We gain more by looking on what is perfect than by striving against

what is imperfect. One of the strongest laws of our nature is the law of imitation. We grow into what we behold. It is proverbial as to our faults; "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Even our bodies feel the power of this law. Our unreasoning, material forms mould themselves into the likeness of the features towards which they are continually turned. This is the secret principle of family likenesses. The law operates for good, or for evil. If you would win a child's unfolding spirit to the realisation of the higher forms of beauty, you would place before his eye the wondrous creations of ancient art, or lead him amid some of the glorious scenes of outward nature, by the sea-shore or amid mountains, and the impressions of loveliness or grandeur tell upon the whole after life. S. Paul is only expressing this great law of assimilation in its highest reality, when he says that, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the SPIRIT of the LORD."¹ An objective faith thus continually acts in the perfecting of the inner life. We subdue our pride, not by mourning over it, but by feeding on the lowliness of JESUS. We learn how to give way to others, by contemplating His self-sacrifice. Anger has no power over us, while He Who was smitten on the cheek, is vividly before our mind. We are strong to bear pain, while we look on the Crucifixion. It is far harder work, to overcome any evil passion by striving against it, than if, taking our eye off it, we fix it on CHRIST and realise in Him the grace to which we should attain. While

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

we look at Him our evil insensibly declines, as bad men shrink away from the presence of the holy. His Presence entering into the soul, is like a purer air and a brighter sun to a sick man. The influence of the surrounding atmosphere is felt at every pore. The sick man, passing from his chamber into the open air, at once feels that he is better; he is a different person from what he was. It is so also in the spiritual world. We have but to become conscious of the Presence of CHRIST, and we are at once changed. One act of faith in Him, and the pulse beats quicker. One ejaculation of love; "LORD, I am Thine;" "Hold me, lest I leave Thee;" "Thou, Who didst die for me, fill me with love to Thee;" and the whole current of the inner being for the time is changed. What would it be, if this were one perpetual consciousness, and we were walking in the midst of the sacred inclosure, the sanctuary into which we have been translated, with "One like unto the Son of Man" evermore revealing Himself unto us?

The true inner principle of life is CHRIST revealed to the soul. His work in us is the impression and seal of the form of life on which we feed. Our likeness to Him is the reproduction in us of the features of a Countenance towards Which we are continually turned. We live by going out of ourselves; we become what we look upon. As by the power of the telescope we draw some distant object towards us, till it fills our sphere of vision, and we are translated from the spot on which we stand to the scene which we behold; even so our inner life passes out of itself into the higher Being Which has

drawn us to Itself by the power of an objective faith. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake, shall find it."¹ O joy beyond all thought! O marvellous mystery of our being, that GOD is more truly our life, than we are life to ourselves; that He is more intimately within us than ourselves; that what we are is vanity, and What we look upon is our true Self! "In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men, and the Light shineth in darkness."² "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of GOD, even to them that believe on His Name."³ In this deep sense, "We live by faith, not by sight." We are what we believe. As some of the lower creatures change their colour according to the food on which they feed, so are we transformed by that which we have received within us as the daily food of our soul's spiritual communion. The realities in which we have learnt to live, become our own real life. We know not what we are tending to become; but we know that we dwell in CHRIST, and CHRIST in us; we are one with CHRIST, and CHRIST with us. He is the One Source and Sustenance of life eternal, its Beginning and its End, its Hope and its Fulness. To Him Who hath thus loved us, and washed us in His own Blood, Who alone is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the Presence of His glory, the only wise GOD our SAVIOUR, be all honour, and glory, and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ S. Matt. x. 39.² S. John i. 12.³ S. John i. 4.

SERMON XII.

THE SIGHT OF FAITH.

S. JOHN XVI. 16.

“A LITTLE WHILE, AND YE SHALL NOT SEE ME, AND AGAIN A LITTLE WHILE AND YE SHALL SEE ME, BECAUSE I GO TO THE FATHER.”

THESE sayings of our LORD caused the utmost perplexity to the disciples. Their amazement was more than once expressed; “What is this, that He saith to us? a little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while, and ye shall see Me; and, Because I go to the FATHER? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, a little while? we cannot tell what He saith.” If He be God, how having once found Him, can we again lose Him? If He be merely man, how, if taken from us, can He certainly return to us? Or if He be subject to change, uncertain whether to be seen or unseen, present with us, or far from us—how can He be the MESSIAH of the elect people, the consolation of Israel? Again, how can both His being not seen and His being seen, depend upon His going to the FATHER? Why such opposite results

produced by the same event, His going to the FATHER equally the cause of His not being seen, and of His being seen ?

Such are some of the questionings which we may suppose to have passed through the minds of the disciples on the utterance of these mysterious words. The words are prophetic. It was scarcely possible, therefore, that they should have been understood at the time of their utterance. Their meaning remained to be unfolded by the SPIRIT, when the times of their fulfilment arrived. We now approach them, therefore, with a clearer light than had dawned on those who first heard them. Like other prophetic sayings, they seem to have more than one application, the same truth recurring under different circumstances as repeated fulfilments of the same will of God. Let us humbly seek to consider them under the guidance of His Blessed Spirit.

Firstly, these words announce the departure of our LORD through the grave into the unseen world, when He passed among the long imprisoned dead, “the spirits in prison,” and unveiled His visible Form, His Soul to the longing eyes of the Saints of the earlier covenant, and, overthrowing the powers of hell, delivered the thralls of ages, opening to their gaze the inner realms of light, and the vision of God which His Passion had obtained for redeemed man. This interval between the Death and Resurrection of our LORD, was the “little while,” during which He was no longer seen by the disciples on earth ; and His return from the grave and His lingering among them before He ascended,

was the "little while," during which they again saw Him.

A yet wider application of these words is to be found in their reference to the loss of His visible Presence in the Flesh, and His return in the same Body in His life of glory, as He will appear at His second Advent. The interval between these two manifestations is long indeed to us; but in the mind of God, and the language of eternity, it is but a "little while." Or if the words be understood in reference to ourselves, to our present life while absent from the LORD, to the period of our earthly course, till death uplift the veil, and the disembodied spirit look upon the Face of CHRIST, this will be but a "little while" to the longest liver. To memory's gaze even a life of three-score years and ten will be but as the passing dream of a night vision in the consciousness of an immortal soul.

Such are the simplest explanations of these prophetic words. But they cannot exhaust their meanings; nor do they touch the most mysterious part of our LORD's saying, the connexion of both the not seeing and the seeing with His Ascension to the FATHER. For if the not seeing be easily understood in connection with the going away to the FATHER, how can the seeing Him again be thus accounted for? Nor again, can this promise be limited to the times of the Apostles. The promises throughout this chapter evidently relate to all generations of the elect people of God. Our LORD is there speaking of the mission of the Comforter; of the conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of per-

secution; of the power of prayer pleaded through the merits of CHRIST. There is nothing temporary in these subjects, nothing peculiar to one generation of the faithful. It would be unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that the vision of CHRIST promised in the text, is to be limited to any one age.

Moreover, the fact that our LORD's Ascension was to be the cause of this new sight, removes it from the ordinary sphere of human vision, and invests it with a spiritual and mysterious meaning. Let us not in the interpretation of Holy Scripture put aside mystery, which has been well described as 'the shadow which eternity casts upon time.' There is a vision which is not of the outward eye: the inward spirit sees. It is part of the blessedness of the renewed soul that the world of light and truth in which GOD abides, opens more and more to its illuminated gaze. Not once only is the Ascension of our LORD represented as the turning point, the crisis of a new form of the Divine Presence, a new vision of Himself. His going to the FATHER was not to remove Himself from us, but to reveal Himself in a new Form, passing out of sight in one mode of Being, to pass into sight again in a new mode of Being.

In the sixth chapter of S. John, where our LORD reveals the change that would come over His Human nature, His very Flesh and Blood being endowed with a Presence of which the redeemed should eat and live, and, through such communion with His Humanity, partake of Himself, His whole Being, His Divine equally with His human nature, —when this revelation startled the disciples, He appealed to His Ascension as the solution of the

mystery ; “ Doth this offend you ? what and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before ? ”¹ His words implied that this ascent in His Humanity into the heavens was a more amazing mystery than the manifestation of His ascended Body in the holy Eucharist, and that the one mysterious mode of Being is intimately connected with the other. So again, when S. Mary Magdalene saw Him by the sepulchre, and would fain touch Him, as she had touched Him before, and He checked her, saying, “ Touch Me not, ”—why was this touch forbidden ? He desired to reveal to her the truth that His fleshly Form was about to assume a new mode of being,—that the former sensible communion was to give place to a new order of living intercourse, closer, more intimately conscious to a higher sense, though impalpable to the bodily touch ; and the change again is grounded on His approaching Ascension ; “ For I am not yet ascended to My FATHER. ”² Such communion of a higher order could not then be vouchsafed, but would be vouchsafed afterwards.

These two remarkable passages coincide with the one we are considering. The same event in each case is represented as the crisis of a momentous change, having reference to the same result of a new order of Presence and of contact.

Further, it is revealed to us that this momentous change arises from two consequences which ensued on the Ascension ; one affecting our LORD’s Being, the other affecting our own. Of the change that passed over our LORD’s Being S. Paul thus speaks : “ He that descended is the Same also that ascended

¹ S. John vi. 62.

² S. John xx. 17.

up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.”¹ S. Paul is here manifestly speaking of our LORD in reference to His Humanity; for as GOD He could neither ascend nor descend. His Humanity assumed this mysterious power of “filling all things,” only after His Ascension. Before that eventful crisis the Church is not spoken of as “His Body, the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”² Only in the Epistles is this mysterious attribute of His human nature spoken of. It is nowhere found in the Gospels; because the possibility of such a Presence did not as yet exist. This developed stage of His Being in the Flesh waited for the entrance of His Humanity into the glory which It now has with the FATHER in the unapproachable Light of the Godhead.

It would be confounding the attributes of two distinct natures, the Divine and Human, to speak of the omnipresence of the Humanity of our LORD; but in some manner proper to spiritual beings, the capability of a Presence where and as He will, is imparted to His Humanity by the SPIRIT. He, not as GOD only, but as Man, as the CHRIST in the indissoluble union of His two natures, in the oneness of His Personality, comes to us as He did not before; He comes to us to make “His abode *with us* ;” “He dwelleth *in us*, and *we in Him* ;” He reveals Himself to individual souls; He is bodily present in every true Eucharist; He touches and is touched by His faithful ones; He pervades the whole communion of the elect.

Again, as to the consequences which ensued to our own being. The mission of the HOLY GHOST

¹ Ephes. iv. 10.

² Ephes. i. 23.

was the direct result of the Ascension; "If I depart, I will send Him unto you;"¹ and the effect of the HOLY GHOST dwelling in a soul, is to endue it with supernatural capacities for visions unearthly, for communion with the eternal world. In the words which immediately precede the text, it was promised that the HOLY GHOST "should take of the things of CHRIST and show them unto" us, implying a new capacity in us to correspond with the new revelation, a new power given to man, to behold the Invisible, to touch the impalpable, co-operating with the new power which our LORD assumed to reveal and communicate Himself. In natural philosophy it is a mysterious fact, that although unable to see the inner substance and life of visible forms, we are nevertheless assured of them by a consciousness as certain as that of sight; we no more doubt the reality of the invisible life than of the visible form. Nor need we question the like power in our supernatural faculties. As with the eye of sense we see the outer, the sacramental forms in which our LORD lives and moves and has His being, so with a consciousness that is as sight, with as great assurance, we see the inner substance of His life, His mysterious Presence and communion with His elect.

Blessed and holy vision in which the soul may adore its LORD ever present to its consciousness! It is more than Abraham's joy. Abraham rejoiced because he "saw the day" of CHRIST and "was glad;"² but he saw Him without himself, and only by faith. He was not one with Abraham; He was not *in* Abraham. But to us CHRIST reveals Himself as

¹ S. John xvi. 9.

² S. John viii. 56.

He has enshrined Himself, by the communion of a common nature, even within the soul, even in the body, as the inner Life of both, beheld by a sense which is above all natural faculties, wherewith the SPIRIT raising our nature above itself has gifted the members of CHRIST; a second sight, before which the veil that separates us from another world is gradually withdrawn.

Again, we may understand these words to represent one important feature of the spiritual life which characterizes all the people of GOD in their earthly state. This not seeing for “a little while,” and again for “a little while” seeing Him, this alternation of brightness and of darkness, is what our experience shows us to be the appointed condition of the faithful, throughout the time of their probation. When in the spirit of prophecy Zechariah describes the conditions of the spiritual life that would mark the times of the New Covenant, he uses this remarkable description: “And it shall come to pass, in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day nor night.”¹ How precisely does this prophecy correspond with the words of the text! Only our LORD’s words, as we might expect, go deeper than the words of His Prophet. The Prophet expresses the *fact* of the alternations of the light and darkness, and their intermingling together; our LORD explains the *cause* of the alternation. It is the consciousness of the Presence of GOD, which is the soul’s light. It is the clouding of the Presence of GOD, which is

¹ Zech. xiv. 6.

the soul's darkness. It is the seeing, but seeing "through a glass darkly," which causes that intermingling of the two states, not "day nor night, not clear nor dark, but a day known to the LORD."

And this variation is, as we can judge by our own experience, what is necessary for the soul's discipline in its present stage. The natural world illustrates this necessity of the spiritual life. If it were all sunshine, no rain or mist, would not the vegetation suffer? Would not the herb and the flower spring up luxuriantly, but quickly wither? If, on the contrary, it were all rain or mist, would not the herb and flower be incapable of ripening into fruit? And is not this a very symbol of what would occur in the life of the soul? If it were all brightness, all one clear vision of GOD, all joy, would even the graces which may have been developed, be safe? Would they not be drawn up into an unchastened luxuriance, dangerous to their simplicity? Moreover, some of the deeper virtues would have no possibility of growth. There could be no reality in such a passage as this; "The trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."¹ Such a progressive chastening could have no place in the soul's life. Nor would there be meaning in the promises; "Whom the LORD loveth, He chasteneth."² "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the LORD hath promised to them that love Him."³ There could be no fellowship for us in the Passion; the whole history of the Cross would lose its practical bearing on our lives. On the other hand, if the

¹ S. James i. 3.

² Heb. xii. 6.

³ S. James i. 12.

soul's life were all clouds and rain, and there was no bright shining after the rain, then faith would utterly sink, and joy could have no being, and hope would die, and love could scarcely find nourishment, and the oppressive weight of sin would be intolerable. It is the mingling of the two influences, the alternate brilliancy and shadows, the shifting interchanges of clearness and mist, which causes the healthful growth of the earth's fair produce. And so likewise in the soul's life. It is because sometimes we are depressed through convictions of sin, or fears, or an unutterable sense of infirmity, or an unexplained sadness; and sometimes are lifted up through visitations of grace and confidences often equally inexplicable, and bright illuminations, and consolations coming over us as a flood; because of such mysterious alternations in our spiritual progress, the life of God grows and deepens within the soul. One while patience and humility, self-sacrifice and obedience, resignation and willing compliance, are matured within through sore lessons painfully learnt in suffering, and matured by strong self-discipline. At other times, gladness and elasticity of heart, quietness and confidence, joy and love and peace and hope are nurtured and developed, and form into abiding graces. Again, as the soul passes through these varied experiences, these interchanges of the night and of the day, it acquires that balance of graces, the one correcting the other by their mutual influence, and that intermingling of many graces together, which constitute the true and ripened beauty of the saintly life.

The meaning of these mysterious changes in the

sensations of the soul is, that life is not intended to be either unmixed joy or sadness, but a gracious discipline, in which each in turn bears its part in ever-shifting circumstances, acting upon the different sides of character, and by grace raising to a higher dignity and a purer energy, the multiform powers of our complex nature. Sorrows and disappointments, pain and bereavement on the one side, as on the other blessing and fulness of heart, the cheer and smile of life,—are in their perpetual alternations the means of accomplishing this eventful purpose.

The loss of the sensible Presence of CHRIST is, as even our natural reason may discern, necessary for the exercise of this discipline. An unchanging vision palpable to the sense, would have been as incompatible with this economy of trial, as the complete hiding of His countenance from the forsaken soul. In the one case it would have been all rapture, in the other all despair. What is needed is the vision of faith, which is a seeing, and yet not seeing, a seeing neither clearly nor darkly, but an inexpressible intermingling of experiences which are neither fulness of sight, nor yet blindness. And this wonderful discipline of the soul began in earnest, as the law of our regeneration, when our LORD withdrew Himself into His ascended glory, and the invisible and incomprehensible Spirit came forth to be the second Comforter.

It is important to mark in the text the significant order of the words, “A little while and ye shall not see Me, and again a little while, and ye shall see Me.” The attention rests on the idea of “seeing,” as the end, the closing prospect of our LORD’s

promise. What if it had been reversed; what if it had been “a little while, and ye shall see Me, and again a little while, and ye shall not see Me?” The order of the words, as they now stand, causes the mind to repose in the blessed assurance that this clouded fitful state is not to last, but is the incipient stage of a growing communion with God which is opening into, and at last will rest in the full and unchanging vision of His glory. The order of the words that fell from our LORD’s lips, corresponds with those of the Prophet in the passage just referred to, who after describing the “day known of the LORD,” not “day nor night,” adds, “but at evening time there shall be light.” The unchanging light is the consummation of the clouded day of the Prophet. “Ye shall see Me,” is the point in the horizon on which our LORD bids us rest, as the end of the period during which this weary alternation of seeing and not seeing must continue, to be succeeded by the one cloudless vision of the Living God.

And what is our support now in this our trial state? It is the blessed assurance, that every training and exercise of our spiritual faculties during this our present imperfect, but most real communion with our LORD, every sacrament of which we partake, even every sacred symbol, is the means of a continual advance, a constant drawing on towards that ever clearer and unchanging Vision. They are in their several degrees the shadows through which the glorious light is streaming in, as we are able to bear it, under which the plants which cannot bear the full blaze of the noonday sun, are being nourished for a “little while.” “Verily Thou art a God

that hidest Thyself;" but it is only because we cannot yet see Thee and live, that Thou shinest upon us with tempered ray suited to our weakness; but our dim eyes strain after Thee, and seek to discern Thee more and more, not merely in the special means and pledges of Thy Presence, but even in all these outer forms, these visible works of Thy Hands.

We may take an example from the scene now spread before our eyes of the power of sacred symbols. This magnificent Church,¹ the noblest that art has raised in the latter days of the Church of England, has gathered within it the most beautiful and enduring productions of the natural world, moulded by a master hand into symbolic forms of greatest variety, with a grandeur of proportion, and a calmness of disposition, which speak to us of the majesty and repose of God. Our eyes, as they look into the sanctuary, rest on the symbols of the most stupendous mysteries of our faith in their progressive order, the Incarnation and Nativity, the Crucifixion, the ascended Majesty of the sacred Humanity, and, around adoring, the Communion of Saints and Angels; and these sacred forms fix themselves on the mind with a vividness and sense of beauty which follow us, as we go forth. They are indeed but external things, yet they are to those who behold them in faith, the shadows through which the soul is helped to picture to itself the Invisible. It

¹ This Sermon was preached at All Saints' Church, Margaret Street, during the Octave of the Consecration, in 1859, which fell within Ascension-tide. The allusion is to the beautiful frescoes on the east wall over the altar.

is a blessing to think, that material things, and things too of our own land,¹ can thus be made to minister to the glory of GOD; a joy to consider what influences this one great work of higher Christian art may have, not merely on the feelings of individual souls, but for the enlarging, the deepening and raising the expressions of religious life throughout the Church of England. And surely it is the will of GOD, that outward shadows should minister to the inward truth, though they are but external and transient, ministering only for their "little while." They are true aids in the struggles of an imperfect state, in which while seeing we yet do not see, though they are marks of our infirmities, remembrances of the fall. Had we not fallen, we should have now been gazing on Him Who is the LORD and Maker of all this wondrous material beauty. They tell us, if we read them aright, even in their greatest perfection, how feeble they are, and what need we have to purge ourselves more and more earnestly from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that at length piercing beyond all these outward shadows, we may see with ever-increasing clearness Him Whom they help us to approach.

"A little while," and the outward passes, and the inward is revealed. Who will stand when that Vision appears? Who is so pure in heart, that he dreads not that piercing Eye? Who is so single in the aim of his soul, that he fears not to face the Living Truth? Who is so chastened in obedience,

¹ It has been an object of special care in building All Saints', to use only English materials, the choicest marbles being chosen from among the productions of our native soil. In almost every case this rule has been observed.

that he can welcome the full revelation of the Eternal Will? Who has so set his heart, that God, when He cometh to judge, will find no rival on His Throne? Who has so striven to put away all self, through grace disciplining his nature into one consistent thought of dutiful reverential love, in union with God, the true End of all true life, that he can feel indeed that all this visible creation is in him ministering to the furtherance of an immortal destiny? All that is outward around us, is offering silently but perpetually its mute praise to Him Whom it knows not. So may we, knowing Him with an intelligent faith, and loving Him with an understanding heart, even now with heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell, Who liveth and reigneth with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, one God, world without end. To Him in all and above all, be glory and thanksgiving for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

CHRIST THE END OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

S. LUKE XXIV. 27.

“AND BEGINNING AT MOSES AND ALL THE PROPHETS, HE EXPOUNDED UNTO THEM IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES, THE THINGS CONCERNING HIMSELF.”

IN this interview with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, our LORD Himself becomes the interpreter of the Old Testament. Two facts appear on the face of this account as to the state of belief prevailing at the time among the more faithful Israelites. They looked for a Redeemer, and believed of CHRIST, on His appearing, that He was the Person in whom the prophecies would be fulfilled. “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” But their error was, that they also looked for uninterrupted success in His mission, a manifestation of earthly power, and the restoration of a visible kingdom of glory on Mount Sion. When instead of the realisation of such hopes, they saw a series of humiliations and accumulated sufferings, closing with the Crucifixion, they were unable to reconcile these facts with their

preconceived view of the prophecies, and their imperfect faith gave way. They believed in part, but were "slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken." Their testimony however proves the momentous fact, that there were acknowledged prophecies leading the Israelites to expect a Redeemer, and that in the CHRIST manifest before their eyes, there were many evident signs, that He was the Person of whom Moses and the Prophets had spoken. Thus far their faith had brought them, though they stumbled at the Cross. The line of explanation which our LORD pursued in order to supply what was lacking in their faith, was first to remove the difficulty concerning His sufferings; "Ought not," was it not one of the very subjects foretold, "ought not CHRIST to have suffered these things and have entered into His glory?" Having removed this preliminary difficulty, He then shed the full light over the whole range of prophetic Scripture, from the earliest dawn of the Patriarchal revelation, bringing out the wondrous unity of an all-pervading truth, and connecting together the several books of the Old Testament; "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

It is therefore clear, that before our LORD's coming, there were to those who believed in the revelation of God, manifest prophecies fulfilled in His Person, though the full extent of the prophetic testimony was not then perceived, nor all its parts reconciled; and further, that as soon as the Atonement was offered, the fulness of a Divine interpretation was vouchsafed, lighting up the earlier

Scriptures with an illumination which brought out to view their uniform bearing on the one great central idea of the CHRIST, the Redeemer of the world. For the force of our LORD's explanation recorded in the text is this, that the proof of Himself, as the End of Prophecy, does not rest on a few books of the Scriptures, as an isolated truth, nor on the later prophecies only as they draw near to His Coming, but on the universal testimony, the whole mind of the prophetic revelation, on its consistent expression in its manifold details throughout the entire compass of the progressive dispensations of GOD; "*Beginning* at Moses, in *all* the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself."

In order to appreciate the momentous weight of this exposition of prophecy, it is necessary to consider the great variety of the dispensations, and the entirely distinct lines of thought which they embody. It is in the conspiring of these distinct dispensations and their mutual harmonies, as well as the completeness of their several parts in themselves, that the full truth becomes manifest. The object here proposed is to survey, though it can be but cursorily, these several lines of prophecy as they fall under distinct heads in the progressive dispensations of GOD.

Consider, first, the Mosaic historical books, which form one portion of the Divine dispensations,—the calling of the elect people, and the organization of their polity. The first prophetic utterance after the fall is, that "the seed of the woman" should "bruise" the serpent's "head;" and that this mysterious "Seed" should Himself be "bruised" in His

“heel.”¹ The Scriptures thus open with the announcement of the Incarnation and the Passion. They are indeed revealed dimly, to be afterwards more clearly developed; but these two momentous ideas, the groundwork of the redemption of mankind, form the basis of the whole Mosaic history. The promise of “the Seed of the woman” is the fundamental idea of the records that follow. Abraham is called, that the promise may be fulfilled through him, that in his “seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.”² Isaac is the channel through which the same will of God is to be accomplished; and the patriarchs pass before us in that early stage of the world’s history, only as being the inheritors of the same promise; and their descendants, the people of Israel, are formed into a nation, brought out of Egypt, led through the wilderness, and take possession of the Holy Land, only as the earthly seed of Abraham, in order that out of them might arise the one true “Seed,” the fountain-head of endless life to the redeemed world.

II. Consider again the sacrificial and sacerdotal systems recorded in the books, Exodus and Leviticus, and running onward through all the subsequent history of the Israelites, as a daily ministration affecting every detail of their national, social, and domestic life. The system is grounded on the fact that “without shedding of blood is no remission” of sins.³ On this fact the most elaborate machinery of priesthood and sacrifices was instituted and jea-

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

² Gen. xviii. 18; xxii. 18; xxvi. 21.

³ Heb. ix. 22.

lously preserved; and yet the Prophets declare that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin."¹ "To what purpose," says Isaiah, "is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hands?" "Bring no more vain oblations."² How utterly inconsistent it would have been to speak thus disparagingly of the divinely ordained system, unless some hidden truth were the real meaning of those sacrifices; that not they themselves, but some mystery which had been forgotten by the people was through them to be communicated to mankind. And what could this truth be, but that there was a Blood to be shed, of Which all these daily animal sacrifices were types, by Which God would really be propitiated; and that what rendered the oblations of Israel displeasing and vain, was the incapacity of the people to perceive through the symbolic forms of their outward observances the bruising of the "Seed of the woman," the Blood of the "true Lamb which taketh away the sins of the world?" What could be the explanation of such a multitudinous array of sacrifices unceasingly offered in the Temple of Sion, and so scrupulously enforced, and yet worthless in themselves, except that they were prophetic, and under their outward veils was hidden the all-availing sacrifice of God Himself, afterwards to be manifested in the flesh.

¹ Heb. x. 4.² Isa. i. 11, 13.

III. Consider further the remarkable arrangement of the biographical portion of the historical books of the Old Testament, which forms so prominent and distinct a feature in their composition. While so many of the most exalted and holy are passed over with scarcely any mention, a few only are selected, and these recorded in the minutest details. It cannot be merely for example's sake that this principle of selection was adopted, for why should such as David be chosen, stained as he was with such grievous sin? Or why is Joseph alone depicted in such extraordinary particularity of circumstance? We have a clue to this singular biographical system,—singular at least in a regular connected history,—if it be that the lives which specially foreshadowed the life of CHRIST are described in full detail, and these only. When we read, e.g., of Joseph's being envied by his brethren; of his father's distinguishing love to him in comparison with them; of their conspiring to put him to death; of his being sold for money; of his being sent into Egypt to save his life; of his suffering from false accusations; of his conquest of temptation; his gift of prophecy; his being raised from the prison-house to the most exalted power; his becoming a Saviour to his distressed brethren, though they had persecuted him; of their worshipping him; their sense of guilt before him when he was revealed to them; his pardoning them their iniquity, and speaking kindly to them; his receiving them to eat at the same table with him; and lastly, his becoming the deliverer of all their race, planting them in a land fruitful and secure,—we can understand why this remarkably typical history of the future CHRIST, was depicted in

such lengthened and minute detail. And again, although David is stained with such deadly and aggravated sin, the circumstances of his history,—his being despised by his brethren, and persecuted by the Saul of this world, yet notwithstanding all opposition, raised to be king of Israel; his being the first king who was found loyal and obedient to God, so as to become the pattern of all future kings; his succeeding in establishing the kingdom undivided, and extended to its utmost limits, from the one sea to the other sea; his forming the Temple services and the order of its ministrants, in their perfectness; his bearing the recovered Ark of the Covenant to Mount Sion, and preparing materials for building the Temple of God, the image of the Mystical Temple of the Redeemed; and with these circumstances of life so distinctly typical, his being directly in the flesh the parent of the true King Who should be born “to reign on Mount Sion,”—are resemblances sufficient to show why he occupies so large a portion of the sacred biographical history. Such instances prove that the foreshowing of CHRIST was the special end of this system.

IV. Again, consider the books of the Prophets. As the Mosaic history opened with the prophecy of “the Seed of the Woman,” “bruised in the heel;” so the first of the prophetical books—first at least in canonical order—Isaiah, reveals in one of its earliest chapters the birth of the Son, Whom the “Virgin should” conceive and “bear,” and Whose Name was to be “Immanuel, God with us.”¹ And this foreshadowed mystery of CHRIST’S birth is

¹ Isa. vii. 14.

repeated in a later chapter, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given," "and His Name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of Eternity, the Prince of Peace."¹ And not many chapters afterwards there appears on the same scroll of prophecy the "Man of Sorrows," "the Lamb of the slaughter;" He Who should be "cut off out of the land of the living," though healing all by His stripes, on Whom "the LORD hath laid the iniquity of us all;" the Justifier of many; He Who "was numbered with the transgressors," yet still maketh "intercession for the transgressors."² Here then again are revealed, and with increased fulness, the great truths of the Incarnation and the Passion. They form the basis of the Prophetical dispensation, as before of the Mosaic history; and as the line of the Prophets stretches out, fresh incidents of the life of the future CHRIST were unfolded to the faith of Israel, one, e.g., speaking of Bethlehem Ephratah, as His Birthplace;³ another of His coming out of Egypt;⁴ a third of His being sold for thirty pieces of silver which they cast unto the potter;⁵ until the last Prophet⁶ bids Israel look forward to the time, when "the LORD Whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His Temple," to be "the Refiner and Purifier," to "purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness," thus closing the Prophetical records with CHRIST, as with CHRIST they had commenced.

V. Again, consider the Book of Psalms, which

¹ Isa. ix. 6.

² Isa. liii. *passim*.

³ Micah v. 2.

⁴ Hosea xi. 1.

⁵ Zech. xi. 12, 13.

⁶ Malachi iii. 1, 3.

although it might be classed among the Prophets, yet, because it forms the specially devotional portion of the Scripture, and was the mould in which the mind and heart of Israel age after age were cast, as they continually expressed in its words their needs and aspirations before God, in all the varied phases of their spiritual experience, on this account it should be separately viewed, and has a distinct bearing on our argument.

The second Psalm speaks of the “King set upon His holy hill of Sion,” to Whom “the heathen are given as an inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for a possession.”¹ And this King is declared to be “the Son,” Whom man is enjoined to “kiss,” i.e., to adore, “lest He be angry,” and so he “perish from the right way.” Thus the Incarnation is revealed at the opening of the Book of Psalms, as it had formed the commencement of the Mosaic and the Prophetical records. Afterwards various incidents of the Passion are detailed, as one or another Psalm tells of Him, Whose “knees are weak through fasting;”² against Whom His “own familiar friend whom He trusted,”³ “lifted up his heel;”⁴ Whose “hands and Whose feet they pierced;”⁵ “Whom they stood staring and looking upon, and telling all His bones;”⁶ “Whose garments they parted among them, and cast lots for His vesture;”⁷ on Whom “they gnashed their teeth, saying, God hath forsaken Him;”⁸ to Whom “they gave gall to eat, and vinegar to drink;”⁹ Who

¹ Ps. ii.² Ps. cix. 23.³ Ps. xli. 9. Bible version. So also S. John xiii. 18.⁴ Ps. xxii. 17.⁵ Ps. xxii. 17.⁶ Ps. xxii. 17.⁷ Ps. xxii. 18.⁸ Ps. xxxv. 16.⁹ Ps. lxxi. 9.

died "commending His Spirit to His FATHER,"¹ but yet Whose Soul was not left in Hell, neither His Holy One saw corruption.²

These minute details of the future Passion were day after day, through successive centuries, the continued breathing of prayer, the expression of the deepest emotions of the entire nation from generation to generation, from childhood even to hoar hairs, and were intended, we cannot doubt, to be the means of connecting, through such devotional use, the most momentous truths with associations of the tenderest and profoundest character that can affect the human heart.

VI. Again, consider the didactic or moral books of the Old Testament. Though at first sight they may seem to contain only lessons of prudence and practical morality, yet a deeper study brings out to view a mysterious Presence underlying the practical lessons, as though a Divine Person were revealing Himself, and adapting His infinite knowledge to man's intelligence. Wisdom speaks as a living Person, rather than as an attribute of the mind; and the words are of One Who is equal with God, while yet assuming human lineaments in order to make Himself known to the creature. At the opening of the Book of Proverbs, "Wisdom crieth without, in the streets;"³ but yet with the promise that none but God could give; "I will pour out My Spirit upon you, I will make known My words unto you."⁴ His generation is from everlasting; "The LORD possessed Me in the beginning of His way,

¹ Ps. lxix. 22.

² Ps. xvi. 11.

³ Prov. i. 20.

⁴ Prov. i. 23.

before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, before the earth was." . . "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." And yet there is a special bond between Him and man; "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and My delights were with the sons of men."¹ Thus the existence of a Person Who is equally one with GOD and man,—the Mediator, the Intercessor, to Whom man may look for perfect reconciliation with GOD,—the Incarnation of the Word of GOD, is set forth, as the inner life of the moral teaching of the old covenant, equally as of its political and sacrificial systems.

VII. Consider, moreover, the wonderful history of the people to whom these oracles were given, their whole national existence bearing evident witness to the fact that they were raised up and sustained for one definite end, to be the depository for the world of the knowledge of the True GOD. View them all along their Providential course, constantly looking to their MESSIAH, surviving while nation after nation around them, and nations far more powerful than themselves, passed away in the stream of time, still preserved in their national unity; but this only up to a certain time, only until the Seed came, in Whom the promise was given; and then, when He had come, and thus the purpose of their existence was accomplished, they are scattered, ceasing to be a people, without a Temple, without a sacrifice, without a home, yet still living on, but now for a different purpose, to bear witness by the

¹ Prov. viii. 22, 23.

curses which they inherit, that He Whom they had rejected, is the true and living God ; to be now the monuments of His judgments, as before they had been of His peculiar favour ; and thus existing as a people for little less than four thousand years, unintelligible alike in their unprecedented rise, as in their equally unprecedented fall, the singularity of their destiny whether in the time of their national unity or in their dispersions, unless we believe that CHRIST to be born of them according to the flesh, was the object of their whole preceding existence during their possession of the Holy Land, and CHRIST visiting His Blood on them and on their children, the cause of their whole subsequent wanderings, and their woes.

It is specially to be noted that the force of the argument from prophecy, if understood in its most extensive sense, rests not on individual passages, numerous and varied as they are, but on the whole structure of the earlier Scriptures ; and not merely on the Old Testament as a whole, but on each several portion of the Old Testament, as a separate whole ; and then on the agreement of these several separate wholes in one comprehensive unity. The Mosaic, the Biographical, the Sacrificial, the Prophetical, the Devotional, the Moral dispensations, have been shown to be framed alike on the one groundwork of CHRIST, and each to coalesce into a common unity in the entire body of Scripture with the same end in view. And further, this common mind of the Scriptural oracles has been shown to correspond with the history of the nation, to whom they were given, one central idea running

uniformly through both the writings and the life of the people, as the basis and purpose of their common existence. Let the Old Testament, or the people of Israel, be viewed irrespective of CHRIST, without this one common idea as a clue to their interpretation, and we should find anomalies of expression and event, unprecedented in the records of the world, and irreconcilable with any known laws, whether of literature or of national life; and yet at the same time both the books and the people claimed for themselves a Divine origin and a perpetual special Providence, assuming to be the only people, and the only books, of the old world, possessing the knowledge of the true GOD, or commissioned to speak in His Name. We are therefore reduced to the alternative of either pronouncing these Scriptures to be altogether a falsehood and a blasphemy, or else accepting them in the most literal sense in all their details as the profoundest verity, ever ministering to CHRIST, and recording of Him what "holy men spake as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST."¹

It is a fearful thought, that the truth may be revealed before the eyes of men, yet be unperceived, unknown; the same Presence manifest to some, hidden from others. This however is not peculiar to the revelation of GOD in the Scriptures; it is the same with the indications of His Presence in the natural world. The visible creation is marked by the striking circumstance, that at the same time GOD therein reveals Himself to the believing, child-like mind, and conceals Himself from the sceptical

¹ 2 S. Pet. i. 21.

and proud of heart. The believer and the sceptic alike look out upon the world of nature, and alike are satisfied with their different conclusions. The one sees GOD and the other sees Him not. The Bible reveals the inner spiritual world of GOD, as nature is His outward material world; and we might expect that, as the Author is the same, the manner of His revelation would be the same also. We might expect that, while minds prepared to hold communion with GOD, will see Him manifesting Himself in the Scriptures, other minds that are unprepared will be equally clear as to not seeing Him; that the vision of GOD in His Word, as in nature, will at the same time unveil and conceal Itself, according to the condition of the soul that beholds the mysterious manifestation.

In the tenth chapter of S. John's Gospel, the Jews are described asking our LORD to tell them "plainly," whether He "be the CHRIST." Our LORD's reply was as plain and unmistakeable, as human language admits: "I and My FATHER are One." But "the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." Our LORD immediately spake again, saying to them; "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods, unto whom the Word of GOD came, and the Scripture cannot be broken; say ye of Him Whom the FATHER hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the SON of GOD?" He seems to withdraw His former assertion; but in truth, as is ever His wont in this our present stage of trial, He but casts around His awful Majesty a veil, hiding Himself, lest the Light

¹ S. John x. 24.

shining in upon unprepared hearts should wither and extinguish for ever the hope of repentance when the soul may yet recognize Him and live. It is so at all times. He reveals His Presence, as we are able to bear It ; conceals Himself, if we are unfitted to receive Him ; waits for us till He may become what He ever desires to be, a vision of joy, ready to shine out again in ever-growing fulness, as we are able to apprehend Him, the same and yet not the same ; the same in Himself, changed to us, but only because we are changed in ourselves. He is ever the same, though we fail to see Him. We see Him now, where before we were blind, because He has purged our sight, and the scales have fallen from our eyes.

Let us in conclusion consider some of the conditions on which depends, through the grace of GOD, our fitness to receive the manifestation of CHRIST.

1. We must accept the idea of mystery, i.e., the belief that not all that is presented to the mind of man is capable of being comprehended by man, as the constant and necessary accompaniment of revelation. Such must needs be the case with the holy Scriptures, which are a manifestation of the invisible and supernatural, and must therefore contain visions of objects greater than human language can express, or human intelligence clearly perceive, an inner and a higher world breaking through a partially opened veil on minds which at the best are but imperfectly exercised to discern aright things that are on earth, how much less things that are in Heaven. Mystery is not limited to revelation ; it pervades human life under various aspects. The

lowest form of mystery is connected with the invisible, impalpable elements of nature, and their subtle movements operating everywhere around, within us, of which we feel the tremendous force, and yet are not able to discern their presence, or track their movements. A profounder mystery is the existence of intelligent life in material forms, the highest degree of which is the embodiment of the human soul in forms of flesh. How life of this high order dwells in a material body, acts upon it in all its organs, yields to it and yet controls it, moves it and is moved by it, is one with it yet can be wholly separated from it, gives to it features and expression and yet itself is hidden,—is in every phenomenon of such an existence to us unintelligible, while nevertheless we have a perpetual instinctive perception of the certainty of this complex twofold life. It is but another mystery, though one of a far deeper and transcendent order, that the Divine reveals Itself through the human, that God speaks in human language, that the Infinite accommodates Itself to finite forms, that in what are merely shadowy symbols, and earthly signs, and feeble words from the frail lips of fallen men, the Eternal and Incomprehensible Godhead manifests His Presence and secret mind. It follows as a necessary consequence of the mystery, that the words and shadows which He vouchsafes to employ, contain meanings which we can scarcely, if at all, apprehend, and that the perception of their deeper significance depends on conditions of His own ordaining, on the measure of the grace which He vouchsafes to give, and the spiritual training of the soul becoming gradually capable of more perfect communion with Himself.

2. It is needful to reconcile the claims of reason and faith, which to many seem to be at variance, their minds being uncertain, whether simply to accept all that is presented to them as of God without inquiry, or to limit belief to what they are able to comprehend, the end of the one course being superstition, of the other rationalism.

The error lies in supposing that reason and faith are opposed, and proceed on contrary principles of thought. They are rather similar operations of the mind employed in different spheres of knowledge.¹

¹ The term, faith, is used in different senses in Holy Scripture. (1.) It expresses the principle of fidelity, or conscientiousness; as in Gal. v. 22. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, &c.;" and again, Rom. xiv. 23. "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin." (2.) Firm confident trust in the promises, power and personal support of God; as in 1 Cor. xiii. 2, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains;" and again, S. James ii. 22, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (3.) When used with the definite article, an objective creed, specifically the true doctrine of CHRIST, as in Acts xiv. 22. "Exhorting them to continue in the faith;" and 1 Cor. xvi. 13, "Stand fast in the faith." (4.) As the correlative of sense (3.), or the subjective view,—a living acceptance of the true doctrine; as in Acts xx. 21. "Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST;" and 1 Tim. v. 12. "Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith." (5.) The principle of serving God out of pure trust in His mercy, without any idea of merit, as opposed to the principle of meritorious and rewardable obedience, the former embodied in the Gospel, the latter in the law; as in Rom. iii. 27. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith;" and Gal. iii. 11, 12. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith, and the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them." (6.) Connected with sense (5.) is the use of the term

By reason the soul embraces what it is able to apprehend according to natural laws of thought: by faith the soul embraces what the Spirit of God reveals to it, according to laws of thought operating through His gracious aid above the natural powers of reason, yet in intimate accordance with them, if not an actual development of them, by a divine energy animating and exalting the soul. Faith is as a sublimed and transformed reason, having its instincts and laws, which the soul acknowledges and feels to be supreme, without losing its own properties or freedom of action. Faith is the expansion and exaltation of the soul,

in the technical theological formula, implying simply the absence of merit, and dependence on mercy forgiving sin, and renewing life purely for CHRIST's sake, out of love to one who pleads nothing, has nothing to plead; faith being selected to express the doctrine of unmerited salvation, not as though it had a claim of fitness more than works, but because better than any other exercise of the renewed soul, it denotes the powerlessness of man, his need of total dependence on God, as being a simply recipient state, looking out of itself, and casting itself on another. According to this view of the term, S. Paul's declaration, "We are justified by faith," is thus expressed in the Church's language, as an identical proposition; "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our LORD JESUS CHRIST by faith, and not for our own works and deservings." Art. xi. "By faith" in this formula implies simply the unmeritoriousness on man's part of his salvation, and the living acceptance of this truth by the soul. (7.) The larger sense including all the foregoing, excepting sense (3.) but besides these, the embracing by the soul the Invisible as an object, rule, and end of all life, varying in different persons according to the nature and amount of the revelations vouchsafed, but the same in spirit in all cases. In this sense the term is used by S. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 7. "We walk by faith, not by sight." And again, throughout chapter xi. of Hebrews, though there also more especially including sense (2.) In this last sense the term is employed in the text.

neither disparaging nor contradicting any one of its own true functions, although raised into a conscious union and co-operation with the mind of God. Faith ponders the truths of a higher world, as reason those of this lower world. Faith draws its conclusions, and grasps its ideas in the supernatural, as reason deals with its kindred objects in the natural, world. Reason leads us to the threshold of the sanctuary, faith enters within it. The great sages of heathen Greece and Rome prove what reason can do in searching after God; the Saints are witnesses of the truer, higher reach of faith. They do not differ as to the laws of thought. The Saints still sit at the feet of the ancient sages, learning of them how to regulate and strengthen the powers of judgment, and testing by the authority of their master-minds the processes of thought employed even in the profoundest theology. But they are advanced far beyond them in the spheres of divine knowledge, their capacities indefinitely enlarged, their perceptions purified and quickened, their hold on the True and the Eternal maintained by His very Presence, dwelling in them, Who is the perfect Light, Who desires to reveal Himself ever more and more to every soul, that seeketh Him.

The grace of faith neither absorbs, nor sets aside the operations of reason; it recognizes reason as God's chiefest gift to man, intermingles with its powers, and acts through them; it is itself the highest reason, or rather the superadded, the crowning glory of the rudiments of high intelligence with which the Creator endued unfallen man. To separate faith from reason is to dethrone reason, to evacuate

it of its truest greatness ; for reason needs faith to reach its intended height, to become capable of apprehending the highest verities. To disparage reason for the exaltation of faith, is to deprive faith of the groundwork of its development, and the safeguard of its truth ; for grace, while raising humanity, acts according to its natural laws.

But faith is not to be regarded merely in its connexion with reason. It has a wider range within the soul, being the superadded grace of every faculty. Faith quickens and exalts every faculty, as it enters into and transforms the reason. We live by faith, all our inward powers being raised by its influence to embrace GOD and the unseen world. The imagination is kindled and sanctified by faith, soaring into highest mysteries under its sure guidance. The conscience judges with more solemn authority, by faith realising the inner Presence of the Eternal Judge speaking through its voice. Hope wears a brighter radiance, and with a freer confidence amid all changes and chances of a world of trial, clings to unchanging Love by an instinct deep as the life which faith feeds. Faith is the stretching forward of our entire nature towards the Eternal and the Invisible, the going forth of one's whole self beyond oneself to reach unto GOD, to lose oneself in GOD, to be found again in Him as one with Him. Faith animates the whole life, not losing any portion of true humanity, but drawing it more and more within the veil, till it is hidden with CHRIST in GOD.

3. One other condition of life, characterising a soul endued with the capacity of receiving the

manifestation of CHRIST, is implied in our LORD's act of thanksgiving to the FATHER, when He saw the grace realised in His disciples trained under His immediate guidance. "I thank Thee, O FATHER, LORD of heaven and earth, that," although "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, Thou hast revealed them unto babes."¹ S. Peter, one of the blessed company in whom this spirit, which drew from our LORD His words of thankfulness, was then growing, afterwards renews His Master's precept, enjoining the same mind on the infant Church; "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."²

The spirit here enjoined is opposed to the tendency of pride, to stand, as it were, outside the truth of God, regarding it as a subject for critical speculation, dealing with it as one would deal with a work of art, or a discovery of science, trusting to one's own understanding to judge whether to accept or to reject it, or indifferent whether to decide or no. Such a mind our LORD condemns, as "the wise and prudent," from which God withholds His light, which is opposed to the mind of the babe. It is not meant that human reason is superseded by revelation, or that the exercise of judgment is inconsistent with grace. To suppose this would place Holy Scripture at variance with itself. It is declared to be one of the special attributes of the "spiritual," that he "judgeth all things."³ It is one blessing of the pure and illuminated mind, that its "senses are exercised to discern between good and evil."⁴ The

¹ S. Matt. xi. 25.

² 1 S. Pet. ii. 2.

³ 1 Cor. ii. 15.

⁴ Heb. v. 14.

spirit with which the faculty of judgment is employed, not the act of judgment itself, is the point on which the question rests. An act of judgment, whether consciously or unconsciously, must of necessity accompany all choices of the mind; the most careful judgment choices of the greatest moment. But judgment needs to be influenced by grace.

The true, the babelike mind is that which, instinctively recognizing the true food of life, feeds on it, draws in from it ever fresh nourishment, clinging to the breast from which it feeds, enlarging its desire as it grows, not knowing how it grows thereby, nor what the results may be, but assimilating to itself the substance of that which it receives, till it be converted into it, becomes one with it. To keep the soul in this attitude towards God and the things of God, with such ready yielding of self and such desire, with such aptness to learn and to be fed, with such clinging trust, such surrender of all power, all faculties to be trained and directed; with such repose, such quiet assurance, that whatever comes from the Source of life must be for the soul's good; not speculating doubtfully on what is working around or within oneself; not anxious to understand, committing the present and future equally to God; contemplating, rather than judging; adoring, not discussing; being conscious of the perpetual Presence of Him before Whom all creation bows and obeys; this is to partake of the mind which awakened the thanksgivings of the Son of Man, and unites the soul with the Mind of the FATHER.

Where there exists this desire for constant growth

in the knowledge and love of God, this perpetual longing to give oneself to what is above oneself in the unchanging aim to advance from truth to truth, from grace to grace, circle within circle, higher and higher, into the very sanctuary of the Source of Life, with the instinctive consciousness that only thus the yearnings of the immortal spirit of humanity can be satisfied and rest,—there is the groundwork of the mind which God has sealed to be the chosen vessel of the revelation of mysteries in ever growing light, advancing ever more and more unto the perfect Day.

O blessed knowledge of the Living, the Holy God, above all price, above all human estimate, filling the Seraphim in their spheres of glory with ever-renewed gladness, before which the Principalities and powers in heavenly places wait, as the increasing fulness unfolds Itself before their wondering and adoring gaze, which Thou, O most Merciful, hast revealed even to us unworthy, in words of life, in measure suited to our infirmity, but opening into ever-increasing depths for those who prepare their hearts through Thy grace for the Divine vision, spread Thy secrets before our eyes, as the summer light steals over some wide far distance, falling on one and another spot, till the whole scene is illuminated; so teach us to see the truth of the LORD of Lords, the mystery of CHRIST, in the inspired record, that through the sacred letters everywhere we may see fresh revelations of His hidden mind, Himself the central Orb of Light in every part, that the illumination may embrace all the world in which we darkly move, all His natural

Providence, and, greatest of all present mysteries, His own indwelling through the SPIRIT in our regenerated nature, transforming all that we behold, as we ourselves are transformed, to glorify Him for ever. To the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, one undivided and adorable TRINITY, be all glory and thanksgiving, for ever and ever. Amen.

Inc of St. Simon and Jude. 1863.

SERMON XIV.¹

CHRIST THE SOURCE OF SANCTITY.

GAL. II. 20.

“I LIVE; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME.”

THESE words are a revelation of personal experience. The veil of the outer life is withdrawn, and the source and strength of the life within is seen. They are the words at once of an inspired Apostle and a great Saint, and this combination in the writer gives to his words their peculiar value. For had he been an inspired Apostle only, there would have been room for doubt, whether the life he speaks of, however true as a theory, could be realised in the persons of ordinary men; had he been a Saint only, it might have been questioned whether his words were not the delusion of a devout imagination. But the illumination of an Apostle and the experience of a Saint meeting together, invest the words not merely with a reality in themselves, but with a personal application that brings them within our

¹ This Sermon, now republished, was preached on S. Barnabas' Day, at the anniversary of the Dedication of S. Barnabas', Pimlico, 1857.

reach, and gives a true interpretation to the practical experience of the Faithful in all ages.

Moreover, this revelation of the hidden life evidently is not applied by S. Paul to himself alone. He speaks of the same mystery in relation to all whom he addressed; "Your life is hid with CHRIST in God."¹ It is the result that he yearns to see fulfilled in all; "I travail in birth again until CHRIST be formed in you."² It is the burden of his prayer for the whole body; "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His SPIRIT in the inner man; that CHRIST may dwell in your hearts by faith."³ It is the groundwork of every man's hope; "Know ye not your own selves, how that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates?"⁴ And again it is appealed to, as the animating principle of life in all; "CHRIST in you, the hope of glory."⁵

Our LORD spake of the same mystery in the holy Gospels, although there is a difference in the manner of speaking, such as might be expected under the different circumstances of the Gospels and the Epistles, but the truth revealed is the same. "Abide in Me, and I in you . . . I am the vine, ye are the branches." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing."⁶ "At that day ye shall know that I am in My FATHER, and ye in Me, and I in you."⁷ "The water that I shall give you, shall be in you a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."⁸

¹ Col. iii. 3.

² Gal. iv. 19.

³ Eph. iii. 16.

⁴ 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

⁵ Col. i. 27.

⁶ S. John xv. 4, 5.

⁷ S. John xiv. 20.

⁸ S. John iv. 14.

In the Epistles the truth is spoken of experimentally, as the voice of one who perceives it working in himself. In the Gospels it is spoken of authoritatively, as the voice of Him Who creates it. As at the beginning in the creation, God uttered what He willed to exist, in brief sentences; "Let there be light, and there was light;" so in the Gospels He speaks after the same manner what He willed to arise out of His Own Incarnate Form as a new creation in the inner life of man. The same truth also appears in the Apocalypse; only there again under a different manner of speech suited to the peculiar style of that deeply mystical book. As it is expressed authoritatively in the Gospels, experimentally in the Epistles, so it appears symbolically in the Revelations. And this sometimes with reference to the Church as a whole, sometimes individually of its several members. The Church as a whole is represented as the "woman clothed with the sun;"¹ its individual members as they "which are arrayed in white robes."² In both cases is represented Humanity raised into a supernatural state by a Presence from above, Which has combined Itself with it—enveloping, penetrating, transforming it into Its own likeness; humanity "clothed upon" with "the Divine nature."

In each case, though under varying modes of expression, the same mystery is revealed; that the new life arises not from any mere influence, nor merely from the apprehension of an external truth, nor from reliance on any promise, nor from the mere imputation of any work of God; but from an internal union with the LORD of Life Himself

¹ Rev. xii. 1.

² Rev. vii. 13.

dwelling in the depths of our being; from actual adherence in His Person; from a gracious Presence Which has taken possession of the soul; from the Divine nature Itself incorporated with our nature; so that our old personality is changed, and a new personality is created, and it becomes true for a man to say, It is "not I" that live, "but CHRIST liveth in me."

Or to view this mystery from another point. The influences for good which work within us, the graces developed, the powers put forth, the transformations of character manifested, are not gifts coming directly from above, are not streams flowing in from a fountain of life external to ourselves; but they arise from a source which resides within; from the life-giving Incarnate GOD secretly enshrined in the hidden depths of the individual life. We live, because the Author of life lives in us. We are enabled to accomplish the will of GOD, because He Whose will it is, dwelling in us, develops from out of Himself the power of fulfilling it. We live not on a doctrine, nor on a persuasion, nor on a belief, but on a Presence, from Whom of necessity all truth and grace flow.

And here, therefore, we see the office which faith holds. It is not itself our life; but it apprehends our true life. It is the apprehensive power. It accepts the living mystery, contemplates it, adores it. It is the soul's inner eye discerning the LORD's Presence. It beholds, embraces GOD within. Faith in the indwelling Presence is to the soul, what the vision of GOD in His glory is to the angels in heaven. The SON of GOD Himself enfolded in the

soul's inner life is its life, and faith feeds on the mystery ; and as it is one part of the truth, that "not I, but CHRIST liveth in me," so it is another part of the same truth, that "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the SON of GOD, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." It is by faith; in the use of sacraments, through the creative power of the HOLY GHOST, that the souls of the just live ; but the centre and source of the soul's life is the very indwelling of the Incarnate GOD, to which the HOLY GHOST ministers, which is the grace of sacraments, which is the object of faith.

Again, it is another part of this mystery, that while one's self seems absorbed in the overshadowing and interpenetrating of this pervading Presence, one's individuality is still always preserved. Each one takes his own separate form. Each one develops into the distinctive attributes of individual character. The organs and faculties of personal distinction are left to their own free play around the centre of each man's will. As each star is distinct in itself in the nebulae that cover the fields of the heavens, although the individuality of those component stars seems lost to the eye in the cloud of undistinguishable brightness ; so even in the final glory of the redeemed, all individual being is still preserved ; the forms, and features and distinctive characters of each one whom the Divine Presence has absorbed into Itself will for ever exist, and be manifest ; the awful responsibilities which attach to the individual identity of the soul are unchanged and unchangeable through all eternity, even as GOD Himself is unchangeable in His own separate exist-

ence. While it is true for each one to say, "CHRIST liveth in me," it is equally true for each to say, "*I* live;" it is still "the life which *I* now live," the separate personal existence of each is a true part of the same abiding mystery.

O most marvellous consequence of the Incarnation of God! If our manifold faculties and organs, and even their bodily framework, are "fearfully and wonderfully made," what must it be to look into the abyss of our supernatural life, and in its secrecy realize the indwelling of God, as the Centre from which life is flowing! Nor is the mystery less real or less incomprehensible, because following Holy Scripture we may equally say, "He is in us," or "we are in Him." We are left in doubt whether we are caught up into Him, and as drops sink into the abyss of His eternal Being, His infiniteness; or whether the Divine Person, if it may be so expressed, individualizes Himself, adapts Himself to the finite compass of our personal forms; whether we are together contained in the mysterious unity of His all-pervading Substance, or we separately possess Him in some unspeakably wonderful incorporation. In either case, the result and life of the mystery is the same,—that there is a substantial union between the redeemed and the Incarnate Redeemer; and in that inherent union is the source and strength of the renewed life.

If now we turn to the practical bearings of this living mystery, two points may be selected to form our special subjects of thought on such a day as this.

I. We may see in the principles involved in the text, the chief characteristic note of sanctity. What forms the Saint, is the ready compliance of the soul with the influences of the indwelling Presence of God. He moves the springs of life, gives them their bent, endues them with power, directs them to their appointed end. The being in a state to comply with these influences, and the actual complying with them as they arise, constitutes the saintliness of the Christian character. Hence it is that saintliness always exhibits a likeness to CHRIST. As the streams of water that gush upward are identical with the spring from which they issue, even so there is a likeness in the Saint to CHRIST, because it is Himself reproducing Himself in the individual forms of character of the separate persons in whom He dwells. And this likeness is real and true, though it is necessarily partial, and in comparison with Himself altogether imperfect. It is the likeness of only some special lineaments of His mind feebly developed, because He is reproducing Himself under imperfect forms, in a manner adapted to the limits of the individual characters of created natures.

The great Saint of to-day's commemoration is an illustration of this momentous truth. The first act in which S. Barnabas is made known to us is, that "having land," he "sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet."¹ It was the first outflowing of the love of CHRIST constraining him, and proving how truly he was following the movements of Him Who "though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich."² His next step,

¹ Acts iv. 37.

² 2 Cor. viii. 9.

after he had resigned what he possessed, was to give himself to an Apostle's destiny, thus entering upon a life which is the nearest approach to CHRIST's earthly life. Moreover his name, "the son of consolation," showed, how the distinguishing grace of the Spirit of CHRIST was passing into the souls of men, that through human instruments the love of the COMFORTER might be shed abroad upon the earth. Twice, more especially, it is recorded, how the gentle, sympathizing, forbearing charity of this Saint was exercised. Once when he went to Tarsus to seek the solitary and shrinking Paul, whom he had previously introduced to the Apostles, when "they were all afraid of him."¹ And again in upholding S. Mark after he had failed in his first trial;² for though this act is sometimes viewed as an instance of weak indulgence, I would rather read in it, as S. Chrysostom teaches us, a mark of the same forbearing tenderness and love, helping to restore and lead on the weaker brother to higher services.³

In all these acts, the austerer or the more gentle

¹ Acts ix. 26.

² Acts xv. 37.

³ "To Mark this conduct was exceedingly beneficial. For the awe inspired by Paul converted him, while the kindness of Barnabas caused that he was not left behind: so that they contend indeed, but the gain comes to one and the same end. For indeed, seeing Paul choosing to leave him, he would be exceedingly awed, and would condemn himself, and seeing Barnabas so taking his part, he would love him exceedingly; and so the disciple was corrected by the contention of the teachers: so far was he from being offended thereby. For if indeed they did this with a view to their own honour, he might well be offended; but if for his salvation,—and they contend for one and the same object,—what is there amiss in it?"—S. *Chrysos. Homil. xxxiv. ad loc.* Oxford Trans.

alike, we may trace one uniform sign, and it is this,—an unsparing, single-hearted obedience to the higher promptings which had begun to stir within him. The lower aims of self have passed away. Secondary motives and mere natural longings hold now a subordinate place. The whisperings and questionings of the world have ceased to influence. His actions are concerned with the natural order of human events; but they are disentangled, free, self-sacrificing, simple, bold, moving along a straight line, emanating direct from a holy influence, and as directly tending to a holy end.

It is this characteristic which gives its peculiar charm to a saintly life, whether in these more striking forms which tell broadly on the world's history, or in the more retired forms which are felt within a narrow sphere. It is not necessarily manifested, as in the case of S. Barnabas, in memorable actions; it may leaven the least romantic circumstances with the same tone and character. There is in such a life a freedom, an ease, a buoyancy, a brightness, a consistency, a cheerfulness, a simplicity, a quietness, a readiness in overpassing obstacles or enduring the severest pangs, which, wonderfully combined together, give to the lightest word a supernatural power, and shed around each step a grace like to an angel's presence. This is also the secret of the heroism, the dauntlessness which marks a saintly life: it is released from depressing fears, and is more and more disengaged from self-consciousness. In the consciousness of a higher Self, the awful indwelling Presence, there are imparted new motives and a strength which raise the soul above the order of nature, enabling

it to overcome the world, as it loses itself in the contemplation of GOD, the Beginning and End of its being.

Along the course that the Catholic Church has run, these personal manifestations in her long line of Saints stand prominently out to view, proving the reality of the grace of GOD which is in her, and witnessing the transcendent mystery of the Divine Presence Which now resides within humanity, and invests individual forms like our own with the express image of the Person of CHRIST. It is the same deep truth continually embodied in ever multiplying forms, and varying in outward characteristics, but one in the source and centre of life. It is the same CHRIST ever diffusing Himself in the ten thousand times ten thousand of that "great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues," who "stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."¹

II. We may also here learn, how there exists a perpetual power of revival in the Church's life, and by what means it may be quickened. The indwelling of CHRIST is, as we have seen, the source of life. Faith in His Presence, as He Himself assures us, is requisite where He is present, or He can "there do no mighty work."² Now there is a two-fold Presence on which the Church's life hangs. There is a Presence common to the whole body, external to every individual member, which centres in the blessed Eucharist; and there is a Presence which is personal, confined to each individual soul,

¹ Rev. vii. 9.

² S. Mark vi. 5.

and centred in its own hidden life; for it is not the Presence of God, simply as God, which constitutes the life of the Church,—this is the creed of nature,—but the Presence of God Incarnate, of God in CHRIST, revealing Himself according to express covenant. As faith in this twofold Presence rises or falls, so may we expect that the life of the Church and its members will rise or fall also.

First, is it not manifestly so with regard to the Church? What is it which alone can give fervour and reality to the entire system of the worship of the Church? What imparts meaning to her ceremonial? What adequate inducement can there be to the adornment of her sanctuaries? What invests them with any real sanctity in the eyes of men? Is it not that they are the shrines of a real Presence of God? What wins us to frequent the sacraments with zeal and devotion? What can draw out from the fulness of the holy Eucharist its strengthening and refreshing graces, but an adoring love and restful faith in the ineffable Presence Which mercifully assumes the sacred symbols as His mode of communion with His own elect? What can appal the unworthy, but the apprehension of that awful Presence becoming to them as a “consuming fire?” Must not the whole system soon lapse into some mere outward pageant, each symbol lose its meaning, devotion flag, and awe cease, without the conviction of the Living God abiding within the visible Form?

Or again, what in this practical age, which views every institution and the deepest principles by the rule of temporary expediency, what at such a time can preserve the Church, its hierarchy, its priest-

hood, its traditionary laws, or make them worth the struggles of earnest men, but a belief in their supernatural life; and in what does their supernatural life consist, but in being the veils and organs of the Incarnate God, Who thus delights to dwell among the children of men? What is it that gives us hope for the Church of England now—not that she still retains her place among the high estates of the empire, not even because so many great works have been done within her borders,—but because we can interpret the Church movement of the last twenty years, no otherwise than as a growing conviction of the Divine Presence within her, and that the fervent earnestness still at work in defence of her ritual, her doctrine, and her sanctuaries, in the development of her true meaning, and her great capacities, emanates from a faith in this indwelling of the Living God?

It has been said that the Church has a power of continual revival, which no sect has; and along the line of the history of the Church and the separations from her, there are startling facts which give a marvellous reality to the assertion. Can we ascribe this remarkable truth to her more stately organization, her deeper learning, her higher position in the world? Is it possible that elements so transient, so simply intellectual, so purely external, can be the source of reviving life, can stem the tide of sin, or stay the madness of the people, or check the continual progress of inward decay? Must it not be due to the promise which runs only along the Apostolic line—"Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?" Is not each revival of the Church the very awakening of the LORD in

the ship on the sea of Galilee, where He had slept for awhile, but where He had never ceased to be? And is it not reasonable to believe that, as faith in that Presence revives and we cry unto Him in the prayer of such a faith, we have the surest hope of the revival of the Church's life?

2. Secondly, is it not the same in each individual's life? Does not S. Paul in his exhortation to bodily purity appeal at once to the amazing awfulness of the bodily indwelling of the HOLY GHOST; "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the HOLY GHOST Which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"¹ He again appeals to the same overwhelming motive in an earlier chapter of the same Epistle, where he speaks against strife and division. He pleads for unity and love on the ground that "ye are the temple of God, and that the SPIRIT of God dwelleth in you."² And indeed what principle can tend to cherish tenderness, lowliness, modesty, recollectedness, dignity, quietness in speech and manner, devotion and the winning grace of a pervading charity, so effectually as the abiding consciousness of our LORD dwelling and walking in oneself as a tabernacle of His own gracious election, and in others as in oneself according to the same promise? What can so sustain the soul above natural desires, in a higher sphere of life, in an ever-upward advance towards the glory of the heavenly Court, as the instinctive sense, rooted and grounded in the soul's life, that there is a wedded union between the soul and the LORD Who bought it with His own Blood, and now Himself within it

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

² 1 Cor. iii. 16.

claims it for His own? What gives so keen a remorse at the hatefulness and horror of sin, as a conviction of its desecrating the organs, the limbs, the faculties which GOD inhabits and uses as the chosen vessel of His own sanctity? It is not what he himself is, that forms the joy of the Saint, nor the failing to be what GOD had willed him to be, that constitutes the remorse of the true penitent; but it is to the one the consciousness that GOD is in him, and he in GOD; and to the other the loss of a Presence in Whom alone is peace, and out of Whom is utter darkness. To realize what we are, or what we fail to be, we must appreciate what His abiding in us causes us to be. We can never look truly at ourselves separate from Him. Our power is His power in us. Our efforts are the putting forth of His strength. Our sin is, that after He had come to us, we resisted Him. Our recollection of being in the Divine Presence is but the apprehension of the most amazing reality on which our whole existence hangs.

What then is the secret of the soul's strength? Must it not be the looking off from all secondary motives, all intervening objects, and looking direct on the Divine will that impels us forward, and by faith in Him Who commands it, going forth to fulfil it? Who can doubt that our weakness lies in some intervening obstacle of the natural self, and that as the soul becomes more simple, the faith more trustful, the aim more direct, the sense of the power of GOD in upholding us, and bearing us onward, and sustaining us through the dark future, more steadfast, just in proportion to these spiritual gains, the life advances towards perfection? And why is

this, but because the natural obstacles being removed, the Presence of God, like the sun breaking out from the passing clouds, is revealed in the life of His servant.

O what will be the sensation of the soul, when it awakes in another world to realize fully what the indwelling of God has been to us, and we remember how we failed to believe in His power and correspond to His impulses! And what will the soul then think of its past repinings, its desolations and its fears, when the LORD Who hath been abiding with us through our hours of darkness, is seen “face to face,” and asks the soul, “What could I have done more? Was I not always with thee, and all that I had was thine? Was it not true that I did not leave thee comfortless, that I came unto thee?”

We are gathered this day on a spot which may well help to quicken a failing faith. In the great design which marks this fabric and the surrounding buildings, and in the carefulness and beauty which are shed over its inner and most sacred portion, we see one of the noblest results of that great movement along which the life of so many of us has been borne for so many years. The recurrence of this festival revives recollections in which are gathered up the hopes and thanksgivings of many anxious days, of prayers uttered and toils borne, and patient waiting rewarded; and as each year passes, with these causes of rejoicing is mingled the touching remembrance of the faces and well-known features of those who have ministered or worshipped here, now gone hence—some to mi-

nister and to pray far away, some in sickness, some passed to their reward. And this year has added its own special cause of thankfulness in the sense of rest after long anxiety and trial; of great gains secured, great principles asserted,—the blessing of a faithful witness borne for the truth's sake.¹

O that this returning commemoration may be a quickening of many hearts—a refreshing from the Presence of the LORD; that the memorials of many mercies may animate us to go forward, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in all holy conversation and godliness; that we may so stand in our lot, enduring unto the end with patient continuance in well-doing, that He Whom we now adore veiled and in mystery, may reveal Himself to us in His glory with all His Saints, and we may enter into His “joy that fadeth not away.”

¹ The decision of the Privy Council in the S. Paul and S. Barnabas' case, which secured to the Church the development of her symbolic system, had been given in the course of the year.

SERMON XV.¹

CHRIST THE SOURCE OF UNITY.

S. JOHN XV. 5.

“I AM THE VINE, YE ARE THE BRANCHES.”

IN these brief words, our LORD represents the progress and perfecting of His Incarnation. He selects an image from the natural world, to express the mystery more vividly than would be possible in mere words. A tree, formed of earthly materials, growing and spreading by a continual increase of the same materials drawn up and quickened through the power of its inward life, nourished from above, by the sunlight and flow of dew and rain from heaven, is selected as the fittest image of the unity and continual growth of the mystical Body derived from His sacred Humanity. The root, the stem, the branches, are realities of a living world, and they are used by our LORD to shadow out realities as substantial in the world of grace. The union of

¹ This Sermon was preached at the Anniversary of the Dedication of S. Matthias, Stoke Newington, A.S. 1855, and was published under the title of “Inward Life in Outward Troubles.”

a divine and earthly life, incorporated in His own Person, thence to spread over the earth, absorbing into itself the creature whom He would redeem, is the truth thus symbolized by our LORD. He describes the wonderful reconciliation and union of the invisible Deity and the visible nature of man; the invisible Deity inhabiting, penetrating, pervading, enfolding the nature of man, and man instinct and breathing with hidden Deity. The Incarnation is here viewed in its full development, in the utmost reach of its consequences and effects in the mystical communication of its life. The perfected tree implies a perfected Body having one life. The whole course of the mystery, from the Conception within the Blessed Virgin's womb to the fullness of the Body of CHRIST, as it will appear in Heaven in the completeness of every member in the Communion of the Saints, is the fulfilment of the imagery.

There are two different aspects under which the mystery is here presented to us; or rather, there are two stages of its progress. First, in our LORD Himself, as distinct from His Church. From His Conception till His Ascension the sacred Humanity was limited to His own Person. During that period He alone was the Vine. Into His own single Person He assumed the complete Manhood, and fulfilled all the functions of our created nature. As yet His life had not passed beyond Himself. It is true that the *power* of His Divine Humanity had been extended, and become a source of healing; once it is expressly written, that "virtue had gone out of Him."¹ But His actual life, His substance,

¹ S. Mark v. 30.

had not as yet been imparted to any, nor had He taken others into Himself. It is true also, that as in Adam there were the germs of the whole race of man, to spring thenceforward out of his loins, and as in a true sense we lived in Adam, and were involved in all his acts, so in a true sense the germs of the whole redeemed race, the many members as yet unborn, lay as an undeveloped substance within the Humanity of our LORD, and in Him lived, though visible only to His Eye, Who sees the end in the beginning. But He was as yet the Vine without the branches. He was alone, separate from His brethren, the Source of the new creation, the perfect Standard, the Pattern and complete Image of the regenerate life of restored man.

From the time of our LORD's Ascension, the scene changes. Thenceforward the second stage of the mystery opens before us. Gradually there is revealed to human eyes what was contained in germ in His own Person. The members of His sacred Body are developed. The expanding branches of the True Vine are seen growing and forming through the power of the new birth into His likeness. He is seen imparting His Manhood, and through the Manhood His Divine life, to the Communion of His Elect. He multiplies Himself. The Vine spreads. He diffuses His own wondrous Nature throughout the ever-increasing community of the Baptized. They have become His members. The Church is now "His Body; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."¹ It is no longer CHRIST alone, but CHRIST in us, and we in CHRIST. The Church is mystically a reproduction of Himself.

¹ Ephes. i. 23.

As He was in the world, visible to mortal eye, so now His Church is in the world. It is still Himself manifested through a derived life by grace in those who are regenerate and made one in Him. The limits of His Body are co-extensive with the vast company, part of which are gathered within the veil, part are still struggling through the coil of this present distress, part are yet within the womb, to be grafted in in due time.

What our LORD represents under the symbol of the Vine, S. Paul represents under the symbol of a temple. "In Whom all the building, fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, groweth into a holy temple in the LORD, in Whom we are builded together for an habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT."¹ The stones constitute the developed temple, as the branches the developed Vine. Still more expressive does S. Paul's language become, when he speaks of the human body, as the representation of our common life in our LORD; and describes how we "grow up into Him in all things, Which is the Head, even CHRIST, from Whom the whole Body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body."² The image of the human body brings out to view a deeper truth than either the Vine or the Temple; for the characteristic of the human body is an organic unity of life, an intimate mutual sensibility of its component parts, so close and vital, that if "one member suffer, all the members suffer with

¹ Ephes. ii. 21.

² Ephes. iv. 15.

it; if one member rejoice, all the members rejoice with it." Between our LORD, the Head, and all who are in communion with Him, His members, and between the members one with another, a perpetual interchange of the elements of a common nature passes to and fro, binding one and all in a common consciousness of immortality and Divine life.

Such is the perfected Humanity of the SON of GOD. CHRIST and His Church are made, in some supernatural mystery, one Being; one coexistent frame. Each of His faithful ones is to be viewed as no longer having a separate existence in himself, but as a very part of his LORD, a member through whom He acts, an organ through which He pours His life. And the Communion of the Elect form one connected substance—one whole; one body having one heart beating with its many pulses. Even the very outward elements of our nature are not divided from Him, according to S. Paul's wonderful announcement, that we are "members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones."¹

As there are thus two periods or stages of existence under which the Incarnation and its effects are to be viewed, so, as it were, corresponding with these two distinct dispensations, our LORD's intercession for the perfection of His Humanity was twofold. His intercession arises first for Himself, in His own separate Person; "And now, FATHER, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."² The fount and centre of life must first be perfected, and next the streams of life flowing forth into the expanding body of His members who were to be in-

¹ Eph. v. 30.

² S. John xvii. 5.

corporated and made one with Him. The second petition then rises for His many members; "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."¹ "That they all may be one, as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us."² The glory of the extended Body of the Church follows the glory of its LORD, flows from it, and is part of it. First His own separate Person is made perfect, and thence the Church, which is His fulness.

Let us now endeavour to draw from this great truth some of its practical conclusions. Firstly we may here find grounds of consolation, specially applicable to the present troubled state of the Church. The passages we have been considering show the perfectness of the sympathy that exists between the LORD and His faithful ones, even on earth. This sympathy is perfect even in our humiliations. The wound upon the utmost spray is felt in the tree's hidden life. The communications are imperceptible to the outward eye, but they exist through the sensitiveness and mutual relations of the several organs. This truth indeed follows from the very necessity of the case, for how could there be sympathy with us at all on earth, if there were not sympathy with humiliation? For what else can the Church's earthly state be, but a humbled one? The humiliations of the Son of Man were not limited to those few years He passed in Galilee, or Jerusalem. The Serpent was to bruise all the seed. His humiliations are continued in His present earthly body. The unbelief of Capernaum, the shame of the judgment-hall, the betrayal of Judas,

¹ S. John xvii. 19.

² S. John xvii. 21.

the wounds of Calvary, are perpetuated in the coldness which is around us, in the blasphemies of the multitude, in the opposition, the distrust, the calumny, the piercings of heart, the rending of ties and treachery of friends, which are now as in the beginning. And they still reach Him through His members. - He still suffers in them; still bears shame through them before the world. What the Prophets of old declared for the consolation of Israel, strong as the language is, could be but a type of what exists now. "In all their affliction," says Isaiah, "He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them."¹ And again, Zechariah; "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye."² For how much more must this sympathy exist now when He is incarnate in the Body of His Church, when there is the contact of the same nature, when there is a very corporal unity? S. Paul's words of himself are not spoken of himself only. He speaks as one of many, and describes himself as bearing what is common to all the faithful, when he says; "I bear in my body the marks of the LORD JESUS."³ And again; "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church."⁴

Are we not then losing the consciousness of His Presence, and looking upon ourselves and the Church as something separate from our LORD, when we are vexed, or irritated, or depressed, as for ourselves, at the contradictions and hindrances which beset us? Should not all such personal feelings be lost in the absorbing sense of *His* hu-

¹ Isaiah lxiii. 9.

² Zech. xi. 8.

³ Gal. vi. 17.

⁴ Col. i. 24.

miliation, *His* pain? If the Church be now shorn of its beauty, what is it but a continuance of the state He visibly bore, Whose “visage was so marred more than any man?”¹ If we fail in our efforts again and again, is it not a renewal of His sorrow, Who “did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief?”² If we cannot utter all our message, or put forth all our powers, is it not still the same as when He had “many things to say unto them, but ye cannot bear them now?”³ Are these things a cause of marvelling? Are they not rather a manifest portion of our suffering here with Him, one mark of likeness? Is it not His grief and shame, as well as ours? If He bear it century after century in long-suffering silence, may not we for our brief and fitful span of life, unworthy as we are to be accounted His, still less to suffer with Him, learn to “possess our souls in patience,” in trials so truly similar to His own in the days of His life on earth, and which still He shares with us through His intimate living communion with us?

II. Our LORD's words imply the truest and deepest ground of the Church's unity. The life of a tree, as of a body, of necessity implies unity. If a body be disorganized, the communications of life cease; it is no longer a body. Nor, again, can two bodies have one and the same life. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.”⁴ But the unity of a body, as of a tree, is twofold. There is the unity between the head and its members, or the trunk and its

¹ Isaiah lii. 14.

² S. Matt. xiii. 58.

³ S. John xvi. 12.

⁴ Ephes. iv. 4.

branches, and there is the unity between the members, or branches, one with another. And the image of the tree teaches us that the former unity preponderates and overrules the latter. The life of the tree does not of necessity pass from branch to branch, but from the root and stem to each branch in order. The whole life of the tree is in truth living in each separate branch through its own distinct organization, connecting it with the parent stem. The sympathies of the several parts, and all mutual co-operation, may cease, while yet the branches live in unity with the central source of life. It is through their common grafting into the same centre of unity that they are one, not through their inter-communion one with another. This one unity alone therefore is essential to life; the other unity is essential only to harmonious and healthful action. The loss of the latter is a loss unspeakably great, but is not a loss of life. Nor is it indeed an entire loss of unity even between the discordant members themselves; for all are still one through their common communications with the same centre of life. A latent unconscious unity at the heart is still preserved.

Here lies the solution of one of our greatest present difficulties. The state of loss under which the separate portions of CHRIST'S Body lie at this present hour, and from which each one suffers,—hampered as it is in its movements, marred and imperfect in its forms,—arises from the fact, that life does not flow freely from one to the other; the one does not minister to the other's wants; love and mutual intercession are lost. But nevertheless the unity of life may be sustained, because each member still

clings to its head, because CHRIST is present in each, and His immediate Presence underlies all other principles of unity. CHRIST lives in each one of His members, even though they are become aliens one towards another, as the love of a parent may equally embrace all his children though they are living at variance with each other. Thus the life of the East is sustained through communion with the LORD, though at variance with the West. Thus the West lives through communion with the same LORD, though separated from the East. Thus the heart of England still beats with the pulse of life that flows from the Heart of JESUS, the central life of the Catholic world, though intercommunion with our brethren of the West be suspended.

Where there are the same sacraments of grace, and the same anointed instruments, there must of necessity be the same Divine Presence, and with that Presence the same life. Our preservation of unity rests on the great spiritual law, that where there exists the apostolical succession of the priesthood, and the true sacraments, there are the "joints and bands" through which life passes; there we have CHRIST, and in CHRIST we have all things. What need we more for life, though more we need for health and perfection? What more can others have for their life? They likewise suffer by the disunion even as we. We without them can never be made perfect, nor they without us. They for their own sake have cause to strive for unity, even as we have. Nor is the loss ours only, or theirs only. It is the loss of the LORD also. His Body is marred. His life cannot spread in its fulness. The travail of His soul cannot be satisfied till all

the separate members are united, not with Himself only, but one with another in Himself. His prayer is unanswered. His intercession before the Eternal Throne, as He still pleads His all-availing Sacrifice, ceases not, nor can His soul rest, till His words shall be fulfilled; and His words are, “that *they all* may be one,” not He only in them, but they all one, “as Thou, FATHER, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us;” “that they may be made perfect in one.”¹ But we need not doubt His gracious living Presence with us, nor despond, because of such disunion, though we have urgent need to seek and pray for the restoration of a perfect unity.

III. Again, our LORD’s words imply the power of perpetual increase and revival through the Church’s hidden life. The Vine is ever putting forth fresh branches, and every former branch has the gift of continually self-renewing life. “Every

¹ S. John xvii. 21—23. It seems scarcely possible to read thoughtfully this intercessory prayer, on the efficacy of which day after day the life of the Catholic Church hangs, without being convinced that the real vital unity of the Church is in its union with Him Who offers it. The highest unity is that between the FATHER and the SON. “Thou, FATHER, in Me, and I in Thee.” The law of unity thence descends and embraces the Church. “That they may be one, even as We are.” And the ground of it, “I in them, and Thou in Me.” These two ideas run through the entire prayer. There is no intermediate ground of unity between the FATHER and the SON. There is none between the SON and the several branches of the Church, which is His fulness. A line of argument and a catena of authorities might be adduced in confirmation of such a belief; but are not the words of our LORD enough? The xviith chapter of S. John is the truest comment upon the text in this point of view.

branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." The truth and enduring perpetuity of this promise are witnessed by our own experience within our own portion of the Catholic community. After the long night of the last century, stretching its shadows into the present, what have our own eyes seen? Where does history tell of a truer, deeper spring of life, than what the last twenty years have exhibited in England? Could a sect be rekindled with such power, and re-assume so much of its earlier love? What but the rod of the true priestly line ever so budded and blossomed? When has there been seen in Christendom a more powerful stirring of the Church's hidden life, which in so short a space has spread so widely, and wrought such works? And it was a stirring of life from within itself. It was not caught from abroad. It was not stimulated by the state. It arose simply from a reviving consciousness of its own unearthly mission. It was while threatened by the state, and through the very occasion of adverse state influence,¹ and when there existed no communication with the churches of the continent, the movement of life began. It was the Branch of the LORD's own planting springing freshly again from its own inherent and undying power.

¹ The "Tracts for the Times,"—to which, whatever some may think of the possible tendencies of the later numbers, no one can fail to attribute, under God, the marvellous revival of some main doctrines of the Faith, and through them of a quickened earnestness of religious life,—were occasioned by the sense of danger, which arose on the suppression of the ten Bishoprics in Ireland, and the threatening aspect of the course of legislation which then seemed to await the Church.

A voice spake, and the heart of this great people was stirred. If we have not seen as universal a response as we hoped for, a narrower circle influenced, and distrust and opposition where we looked for brotherly sympathy and co-operation, yet have there not been faults in the human instruments of this revived work, to which we may attribute much of our disappointment? Can we ever expect even the most unquestioned truth to be universally received? Can we wonder that the principles revived should have been, as His Word, when it came from His own lips, was in the beginning, "a savour of life unto life,"¹ not unto many, but to few. And though we have not obtained all we justly claim, nor can put forth, as we yearn to do, all the powers that we feel within us, yet have we not more than we have deserved, and more than we have yet learned to use aright?

In this spreading of the sacred Vine in England, one precious outgrowth of life has been manifested here. This noble temple, its daily worship, its more than weekly sacrifice, its unbought services, its solemn music, its brotherhoods,—a work thus rapidly growing, against opposing forces, amidst such jealousies and fears, in a new soil, tried even in its infancy by desertion, desertion of those who should have been its chief stay, and yet flourishing more than at the beginning, its annual festival celebrated now with more than former devotion and care,—what a marvellous testimony does it give of the power that worketh in us, and how hearts will ever gather round each centre of true Catholic life? It is as some green spray upon the utmost bough

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 16.

showing all the vigour and richness of the stately tree, and His blessing Who planted it.

IV. There is one truth more conveyed by these words of our LORD, which in conclusion I would urge. They involve the most awful motive to sanctity. It has been shown that each one of CHRIST's elect is taken into Himself by the law of the new birth, and becomes a member of His Body; that by this very fact he no longer lives unto himself, no longer has a separate existence, no longer can act alone, but is become an organ of the Humanity of the SON of GOD, has within him the Divine life intermingled with the natural life, and lives in CHRIST, and CHRIST in him. "Ye are not your own." Even our very members are become His. Our mental attributes, our bodily organs, are become CHRIST's own instruments and members. We may in a true sense even say of each several member of our body; It is no longer my own hand, or my own tongue, or my own eye; they are not mine own, they are GOD's. It is His hand, His tongue, His eye. The awful appeal of the Apostle is not applicable to one member only. Its solemn warning spreads over our entire frame. "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of CHRIST? Shall I then take the members of CHRIST, and make them the members of an harlot? GOD forbid."¹

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 15. The following striking words were in the author's mind: "It seems a trifle to all but earnest believers, to give way to bad thoughts, to take sinful liberties with your eye or hand; but what says the Scripture? Your eyes and your hands are members of CHRIST; shall I then take CHRIST's Eye and

We rise to the dignity of our regenerate life, and aim at an adequate purity, only as we realize the results of the Incarnation in ourselves, and feel that CHRIST Himself is mystically incarnate in our members. How awful to think that, when we sin, we do in some mysterious, yet most real way, touch, and, as far as we may, (dreadful thought) pollute not ourselves only, but Him Who dwelleth in us ! We know how even a profane man shrinks back from touching the sacramental elements with hands and lips unprepared. What ought to be the grief of the man, who feels himself to be the consecrated shrine of a most real Presence, if he give way to an unguarded act, or irreverent word ? How horrible any desecration, when every touch of renewed evil causes Him, as it were, to be crucified afresh, those dreadful Wounds to bleed again ! What anguish to such a man should be the thought, that he has again, in some deep mystical reality, "made Him" to be sin for him, "Who knew no sin," suffering still in his person !

It is not merely as light enters into a body of water and pervades it, that His mysterious Presence pervades us. There is between light and water no community of substance, no identity of being. They are diverse elements, mingling without uniting. It is not so in our case. We are made one substance with CHRIST. By a community of Being we are

Hand, (O horrible) and make an unclean use of it ? Indeed we shall never understand how grievous are our sins against purity, until we have learned to believe in deed, that we are members of CHRIST ourselves, nor against charity, until we believe that our brethren are so."—Rev. J. Keble's Sermon, preached at S. Saviour's, Leeds. "The Last Judgment," p. 86.

taken into Himself. His life flows through ours, and combines with it. He acts in our acting, speaks in our speech, is "touched with the feeling of all our infirmities." He took our corrupted nature into Himself to cleanse it, and now He gives it back to each one of us, the same nature though purified. Thus Himself combining with us, there arises a true unity of life, and, as in a tree, we cannot distinguish between the hidden life and its visible organs. The decay of the branch evil affects the tree, as its greenness tends to its health. What must be even the unavoidable imperfections of the Saint, to Him Who is all Holy? What the daily infirmities even of those who most truly strive to live wholly to please Him, in contrast with the Presence which abideth in us? Should not such thoughts be a check against the cravings of sinful indulgence? How sustaining may such a thought be in the hour of temptation! How bitter in the remorseful recollections of our sin!

The same truth that should cause our constant fear, and may become our heaviest condemnation, is at the same time our ever abiding spring of hope. As His Presence alone can fully teach us, how great is our sin, so It alone can give any sufficient stay to our renewed efforts. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness."¹ "And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."² "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."³ "For it is GOD Which worketh in you both to will and

¹ S. John i. 4.

² S. John i. 16.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

to do, of His good pleasure.”¹ Even the will itself is not our own. But through our will and through our acting, the Divine Presence wills and does what we will and do. He is already the animating principle of our life. We have but to put forth the power which is now within us.

The powers of our life are the goings forth of Him Who is from everlasting. Our renewal and our revival is His Presence. Every effort we make is instinct with the living energy of the Divine Nature. As in a tree, all its powers, all the organs of its inmost heart, pour their flood of life, to invigorate and sustain the remotest spray of the farthest branch, so likewise, by a mystery of incomprehensible love, all Heaven, the powers of the all-pervading Godhead, upholds and quickens each one that trusteth in CHRIST, each one of the blessed multitude Whom He hath drawn and assimilated to Himself by the virtues of His Cross and Passion. May the full results of the Intercession of the LAMB of GOD Who is in the midst of the Throne, which never ceases, sustaining and advancing in us the life which He hath given us, be day by day perfected in us. Yea, blessed LORD, Thy prayer ceases not before the Throne; “Holy FATHER, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me;” “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them, and I in them.”²

¹ Phil. ii. 13.

² S. John xvii. 11, 26.

NOTE.

It would be impossible in the compass of a sermon to exhibit fully the theory of the Church's unity, which is here implied. A few remarks may be added, though without professing to give an adequate account of so wide a subject.

There are two fundamental grounds of unity, the primary and the secondary, closely connected together. The primary ground of union with CHRIST, is the living faith and love which binds the whole Body of the Church, and each true member of the Body, to Him through His grace and HOLY SPIRIT. On this point there can be no controversy among Christians. The secondary ground of unity relates to the organization, or mediate links through which His grace flows to the regenerate soul. This question divides itself into two important and distinct points of view. On the first all the three portions of Christendom which claim to be Catholic, the Eastern, the Roman, and the Anglican, agree. A true Creed, and a ministry capable of duly administering the Sacraments, constitute the first or more general view of the organization, or ordained means of living union with CHRIST. There can be no difference on this point between Churchmen; for the very idea of the Church implies these conditions. It is however a further question, and one on which the controversies of more than a thousand years have turned,—what constitutes the true Creed, and the true ministry?

The Churches of the East affirm that the Creed of Nicæa, and a Ministry ordained by Bishops according to the Canons, are respectively the guarantees of faith and of sacramental life. They say that the Western Church first broke the bond of unity by altering, i.e. adding to the Nicene Creed; pleading the decree of the Council of Ephesus, that henceforth no one should "propose, or write, or compose any other Creed, than that defined by the Fathers in the city of Nicæa,"¹ under pain of deposition from the clerical office, if they were clergy, and of excommunication, if they were laymen.

The Church of Rome affirms that whatever Creed emanates, and whatever Ministry receives jurisdiction, from the Papal See, are respectively the true substance of the faith and the true Mi-

¹ The term, Nicene Creed, was always understood as including the additions made in the Council of Constantinople.

nistry. The Church of Rome therefore declares that the Churches of the East and of England have alike broken the bond of unity ; because they do not acknowledge her claim of sole authority.

The Church of England affirms that the three Catholic Creeds, and Sacraments duly administered by clergy episcopally ordained, are the true media of living union with CHRIST.

Thus there are three theories on the organization of the Church, represented by the three different sections of Catholic Christendom ; but of the three two loosely coincide. Our theory, while it differs from that of the Church of Rome, agrees with that of the Eastern Church ; for although the three Creeds differ in form, they are one in substance, and the authority of the Ministry is the same in both.

The author cannot repress his own deeply-cherished conviction, that the duty of an English Churchman, mourning over the divisions of Catholic Christendom, is plain,—namely, abiding in his lot wherein he hath been called, to foster in himself saintliness, love, humility, and a large-hearted desire for all truth ; to be tender and considerate in his judgments of all who differ from him, especially of those who have been born under different conditions of Church-life ; and to pray with the saintly Andrewes ; “ For the universal Church, that it be strengthened and enlarged ; for the Eastern Church, that it be freed and united ; for the Western Church, that it be re-established in peace ; for the Church of England, that its deficiencies be supplied, its present prosperity be secured to it.”

If all members of the separated portions of the Catholic Church were to pray and strive after these things, for others as well as for themselves, with charity out of a pure heart and faith unfeigned, there would be a hope,—can there be a hope otherwise ? —that the SPIRIT of GOD may arise to re-unite in one mind the divided members of the one Household of the Faith. Meanwhile it is a consolation to believe assuredly, that while they are temporarily separated from each other, they are still held together in Him, Who is their One Life.

SERMON XVI.

SELF-SACRIFICE.

GEN. XXII. 8.

“MY SON, GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING.”

THE aged Father of the faithful pursues his three-days' journey from his tent to Mount Moriah, his youthful son by his side, and the few attendants following, bearing the wood for the burnt-offering, the fire, and the knife. There is intense thought, and a deep struggle at the old man's heart, to whom alone had been revealed the object of the sudden journey; but it is borne silently in entire secrecy. His son, so intimately concerned in the object of the journey, is unsuspicious of what is about to happen, and walks on by his father's side, musing. There is a pause when they reach the foot of the mountain, and the attendants are bidden to tarry there, while Abraham takes from them the wood, and lays it upon Isaac, and himself with one hand grasps the knife, with the other the fire. Then the father and the son together ascend the mountain, no one accompanying them. The wonder of Isaac

deepens as they advance. At length he breaks the mysterious silence; "My Father;" and Abraham answers, "Here am I, my son." Then Isaac utters the wondering inquiry, the relief of long questionings with himself; "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" The father, unable to speak what weighs so deeply at his heart, seeks only to fix the soul of his son, where his own soul was stayed, on the one thought of the unquestioned will and perfect wisdom of God; "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Isaac passes on, musing yet more earnestly on the eventful words, until at last God reveals to him, that he is himself the victim, his own steps leading him to the spot where he is to be offered up, himself the bearer of the materials for his sufferings.

In the cloud of mystery drawn around the summit of the mountain, on which the father and the son are preparing themselves to make the last sacrifice that God required of a faith long nurtured through patient self-discipline, we may learn the momentous lessons which God teaches His people, when He causes them to learn obedience by the things which they suffer, as they are enabled by His grace to conform their minds to His Mind, all doubts and questionings, all natural shrinkings and apprehensions, being overcome. In such a scene we may see shadowed out the experience more or less of all the faithful,—for who has not known at least some measure of a similar trial?—and draw from its contemplation thoughts to strengthen, as increasing years open to us more and more of the chastenings of the Providence of God.

I. In our complex nature, strong passions, acute feelings, ardent longings, intense affections, impulses and appetites, very various in kind, succeed each other, and mingle together, making up the mystery of our inner life. What a throng of feelings are thus ever arising and stirring within the human breast, like the currents of many waters where different channels meet! Each heart has its own distinctive elements of will, of thought, of desire, one after one manner, another after another; or rather the same elements are combined in all, though in various degrees and proportions. These form the subject-matter of our sensibilities, and the materials of our conflicts; the sources of our strength and of our weakness. Thus framed, we become the recipients of the solemn unbending demands, which GOD makes continually on all whom He calleth, or prepareth for Himself. There fall upon our ears words which at first seem to us as unintelligible sounds, which we know not how to apply to ourselves, perhaps hardly dare to face, or seek to apply, which we may consider extravagant, adapted only to other states of existence, strong expressions not intended to be literally interpreted, hyperboles suited to the habits of Eastern thought, the imagery of highly-wrought imaginations. Yet still the solemn words sound continually in our ears. "They that are CHRIST's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."¹ "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."² "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the SPIRIT, shall

¹ Gal. v. 24.² Rom. viii. 13.

of the SPIRIT reap life everlasting.”¹ How slowly does it break in upon our minds, that these texts apply directly to the passions we have been indulging, the longings we have secretly fed, the impulses we have daily experienced; that they are themselves the elements which are to be thus mortified and offered up, the lamb which GOD has provided for a burnt-offering; that all our life long we have been carrying about with us, perhaps fondly nourishing, the very materials of which GOD demands the sacrifice, and on our faithfulness in the trial hangs the question, whether we will be obedient to His will or no. We hear the words which tell of the need of inward mortification. We become accustomed to them, till they lose all their freshness. We read in the lives of some distinguished Saints the long patient wrestling they endured, and look on them from afar, as on the mythical heroes of some tale of romance. How slowly is it recognised—more slowly still fully accepted—that such is to be our own actual work, through some forms of a like discipline, and struggles of not altogether different experience; that we too are called in our turn to bind the strong passion, or desire, and lay it on the altar, and ourselves take the knife to slay it, at any cost mastering and keeping under the untamed elements of our flesh, lest we share the lot of the castaway. Nor is this to be done in one act, to which once for all at some special crisis we may brace our energies, but all life through we are called to learn the habitual spirit of self-restraint, as the very law and expression of our new nature, offering up to GOD

¹ Gal. vi. 8.

continually some fond wish, some long-indulged imagination; and only in the meek, subdued endurance of this continual self-denial lies the hope of the life of CHRIST growing in our souls.

II. This scene suggests another view of the trials which test our faith. Men gather around them objects on which they rest their hearts. They multiply attachments, and form for themselves a home. Habits of business, of taste, or of pleasure, grow to be a second self. They become the centres of manifold relationships, affections, duties, responsibilities, or lighter enjoyments, which gather around each individual life, and constitute for every one a world of his own. Men ever tend to be at ease in their possessions, all things continuing as they were from the beginning, and the possibility of change may become less and less consciously felt, or understood. Yet there are solemn passages of the Word of God, familiar to our minds, silent witnesses ever present to the slumbering conscience, such as these; "Love not the world, neither the things which are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever."¹ And there are words yet more awful; "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me."² And again, "Every one that hath forsaken house,

¹ S. John ii. 15—17.

² S. Matt. x. 37.

or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."¹

There are distinctions to be made between voluntary precepts, and obligatory duties. And it is an unquestioned truth, that while some are called to abandon the world, severing themselves from natural ties, nor again contracting them, even selling all that they have, to "give to the poor,"—others are as surely bidden to remain in the midst of such ties, holding in their own hands, and at their own will, the gifts of the world wherewith to minister unto God, and in God to those whom He hath committed to their charge. But it is also surely true that, if God wills to surround us with the fullest measure of earthly good, and bind us about with fondest ties, His inscrutable Providence makes them the means of chastening us. He requires at our hands—we know not when, we cannot anticipate how—sacrifices of the very objects which He has given us to fasten and cling around our hearts. There may come losses, which leave behind them a fearful wilderness, where all had been as the garden of Eden. A blight may fall on the fair flower we have so carefully tended, slowly advancing against all our endeavours to stay it, or suddenly appearing as in the night. Some disappointment, some sore bitterness, may break into our innermost sanctuary of feeling, as the cry which arose in the homes of the Egyptians when their first-born were smitten. Or our labour may appear to be suddenly wasted, and the object of long desires become inaccessible,

¹ S. Matt. xix. 29.

when it seemed all but within our grasp. It may be only after many years, during which we have fearlessly followed our natural impulses, we find at last that we have ourselves gathered around us the very elements of our trials. They are taken from us, and we must learn the grace of a willing sacrifice. Or they remain, but are changed into causes of disappointment, or anxiety, or vexation. God spares nothing on which men set their hearts, if the discipline is required to perfect the children of His love. The greater our blessings, the greater may be our calls of sacrifice. Men may well shrink from prosperity, for it is accumulating the materials of the burnt-offering. It was even a heathen's thought to cast a costly jewel into the sea, to propitiate fortune, lest, being always prosperous, he should tempt adversity. God knows where we need chastening, where the heart is too fondly fastening itself, where the will acts independent of His will; and if He demand a sacrifice, it will not be "of that which doth cost us nothing."¹

Our only wisdom, therefore, is to hold all we have as already offered up to Him. Our peace is to take heed to His Word; "This I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none: and they that weep, as though they wept not, and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." And the Apostle adds the purpose which underlies this precept; "I would have you without carefulness."² There are two

¹ 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

² 2 Cor. vii. 29—32.

lessons, one of which we shall surely have to learn, if we are to meet Him without terror, when He arises to judge the earth. We must be thoroughly resigned to our losses and disappointments; and we must learn to use His gifts simply according to His will. And again, this latter lesson has two parts, both alike necessary. We must hold His gifts, while we use them as He wills, ever ready to return them back to Him Who gave them; and we must make the infirmities and faults which mar their perfect rest, occasions of patient discipline, not grounds of fruitless complaint.

III. The sacrifice of Isaac, moreover, teaches how full the self-surrender of faith must be. His was not the surrender of this, or that object of life, but the entire oblation of his whole being to God. He was laid upon the altar bodily, with his own willing consent. The witness of God, which he shared with his father,—“In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice,”—was not given till his entire form was bound upon the altar, not until he had meekly and unreservedly surrendered his life. More is implied in self-sacrifice, than the mortification of a single passion or affection; more than the endurance of loss or disappointment in some special feature of one's lot. It implies the readiness to accept whatever call of trial comes in the Providence of God; an equanimity as to the nature of the

trial, allowing no choice. Not but that the feeling of trial is more acute, the trial more dreaded, in one case than in the other; but that the will has learnt to surrender its power of choice, and yields itself as soon as the higher Will is revealed, the consciousness of the will of God absorbing natural wishes into itself, and, as it were, neutralising them. This self-surrendered equableness of the will may be shown in some crisis, which gives the colour to our entire life; or in a succession of minute details in the common wear of ordinary existence. The spirit in either case may be the same. It lies not in the act, but in the meaning of the act; in the grace of the renewed willingness, rather than the mode of its expression. There is in a truly faithful self-surrender an entireness, a consistency, which gives a character to the life. It is the consecration of self on the altar of a heart inflamed by love, when the refining fire of the Spirit penetrates, and illuminates, transforming the whole being.

We learn but slowly what such entire self-sacrifice is. There are chiefly two great hindrances in learning the momentous lesson. We shrink from the efforts which self-denial involves; and, when we have made the effort, we exaggerate to ourselves what we have done. We think that we have done all that is required of us, when we have begun to practise the earliest tasks of a self-denying life. The fall plunged man into two great evils. We lost the love of God, which makes all self-sacrifice a delight; and we were filled with pride, which, creating self-complacency, converts even our best works into sin.

We may see the tendency of our nature in this respect in a remarkable incident recorded of the Apostles. S. Peter speaking as well on his own behalf, as on that of the Apostles, said to our LORD; "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee, what shall we have therefore?"¹ How unreserved seemed their self-sacrifice! How entire the offering which these words imply; and they were the simple truth! The Apostles had, as they thought, included all the possibilities of self-denial in their one act of separation from all earthly ties. They had left home, friends, the associations of early life, the indulgence of their own free-will, the means of earthly enjoyment. They had taken, as it were, vows of perpetual poverty and obedience. But the very words in which they expressed their sense of what they had done, proves that they had carried with them into religion, the hardest thing of all to sacrifice, their natural tendency to self-exaltation. Immediately after these words escaped from S. Peter's lips, S. James and S. John came asking of our LORD, that they might sit, the one on His "right hand," and the other on His "left hand," in His kingdom. The ten, hearing this request, were "moved with indignation against the two brethren."² Separately, and with different objects in view, they were all of them alike disturbed with the workings of pride; one with its ambition, another with its envying, each yielding to the desire for the gratification of self. Then followed our LORD's earnest exhortation, addressed equally to them all: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be

¹ S. Matt. xix. 27.² S. Matt. xx. 24.

chief among you, let him be your servant; for the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.”¹ He taught them the harder sacrifice which they had yet to make in forsaking the strongest passion of their nature, that they might walk with Him in His lowliness.

This incident affords a striking instance of the truth which experience so often verifies, that a sacrifice may be made to God, and seem to be the surrender of all, till some further unexpected testing of the soul, some new form of temptation, proves to one's dismay, perhaps, alas! to cause despair, how much of the inner life remains unsubdued, what depths lie beneath, which the cross has never yet touched. We are always disposed to be partial as to our self-sacrifices, and are ever willing to take credit to ourselves that we have been generous with God. Though all we are, or have, is already His, we reserve some portion of our independent will, or are tender over some sensitive point. Only after long resistance, and oft renewed falls, covering one with shame, after repeated compromises with conscience, and feeble shrinkings weakly yielded to, and then only by continued pressure of the Spirit of God, like the gentle force of the angel's hand constraining Lot to leave the doomed city, we at last learn the fulness of the sacrifice demanded at our hands. Slowly we perceive that we are called to offer our whole sensitive nature, submitting it to any test, according to the supreme will of Him Who made us. After all, at the very best, it is but by a gradual advance, that

¹ S. Matt. xx. 28.

the heart even of the most saintly resolves to yield itself without reserve to God.

First there is but a half compliance, with many repinings and lookings back, and lingerings on some easier path, as Lot, shrinking from the ascent of the mount, entreated to be spared the effort, and take refuge in Zoar. When this stage of imperfect effort is overpast, and upward progress really made, there is still but a constrained obedience, with many fond wishes for former ease. When the necessity for entire submission is willingly accepted, and the grace of God with conscious strength of self-devotion raises above all obstacles, there is still a further state, which it is given but to few to attain, when the soul can say with S. Paul; "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for CHRIST's sake, for when I am weak, then am I strong,"¹—words which imply that the clinging to the Divine will at all costs has become a secret joy, and co-operation with His purposes, even in the painful offering up of all nature's longings, is felt to be a hidden manna on which the soul can inwardly feed, and be at rest, and be satisfied.

IV. There is yet another view to be taken of this scene, which exalts and consecrates, while it supports and cheers a life of self-denial. The offering up of Isaac was the foreshadowing of the Passion of the SON of God. Abraham's willingness to offer up Isaac represents the Eternal FATHER giving His only SON to be sacrificed for the world. The three days' journey symbolizing the three years' ministry;

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 10.

Isaac bearing the wood to compose the altar, as the LORD bore His Cross; both ascending the same hill, that the altar might be raised where the Cross was afterwards to be lifted up; the compliant will of the typical victim showing forth, as far as such grace could be given to man, the self-surrender of the True "Lamb of God,"—the whole scene is prophetic, with the one difference, that Isaac was at the last moment spared, because he needed, as all mankind needed, that Another should die for him, his own death being unavailing for himself; and through the fearful shadow of their own sore trial, the father and the son were permitted to see the "one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

What must have been the impression left on their minds, when the true meaning of the mysterious scene in which they had themselves borne so leading a part, was revealed to them? Surely in all their after trials they must have learnt to look through their own immediate sorrow to the same stupendous truth. The future Passion of the SON of GOD must have abided in their minds as a perpetual vision, interpreting all visitations of pain. The ascent of the fatal mountain, the preparation of the altar, the stripping himself of his garments, the being bound with the cords, the last moment as the knife was suspended over him, could never have passed from the remembrance of Isaac. For ever after he must have associated every pang of suffering with that fearful scene, and learned to look on all sorrow as a prophecy, speaking to him of the mysterious Sufferer, Who in the latter days was, like himself, to be bowed down under a more amazing Agony. And again,

the rising from off the altar, with life so unexpectedly restored, and beholding another smitten with the knife and bleeding, while he himself stood by unhurt, and the voice of blessing which fell upon his heart, because he had not failed in the trial,—must have taught him for ever afterwards to understand the sure rest that would ever follow temptations faithfully endured, the certain recompense of sufferings patiently borne, the life that would arise out of death undergone according to the will of God.

Such also is the view which we ought to take of all scenes of self-sacrifice to which we may be called, all acts of self-mortification which we may be required to make. It is while we regard these trials of our mortal state in themselves alone, that they are so grievous and difficult to be borne. We need to look beyond them, to see through them, and by their means endeavour to realise the Temptation, the Scourging, the sacred Wounds; to see in them a faint shadow of a greater reality; to “apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of CHRIST JESUS,” “that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means we might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”¹ Here is the secret strength of all endurance, the power of all self-sacrifice; and indeed it is one part of the mystery of our union in CHRIST, that sorrow in all His members is connected with His own sorrow, all woundings faint images of His own sore affliction. Each sufferer within the Body of CHRIST, to the end of time, is in a measure

¹ Phil. iii. 10, 11.

“filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST in his flesh.”¹ They are His afflictions, because we are verily His members; He is our true inner life. Isaac for a while thought himself the lamb for the burnt-offering, and only gradually before his wondering gaze was revealed in the distant ages “the Lamb of GOD that taketh away the sins of the world,” as the true substance of the mysterious prophecy of His own agony. He then saw the greater Sorrow in his own. Even so now to the faithful, their own life, their own sorrows, occupy for a time all their mind. But the veil is gradually withdrawn; the consciousness of self diminishes, and the sense of union with their LORD grows upon them, first in the general destiny, next in the particular details of their life. The sufferings of their LORD become more precious in their eyes, because of their own trials which have enabled them better to enter into His sorrows. Their own trials are felt to be a link, a bond of common life between themselves and Him, and with this most blessed sense of living union grows the conviction, that their own acts of self-denial, their self-surrenders, their efforts of endurance, however feeble and imperfect, are as faint shadows cast off from the substance of His stupendous sacrifice and oblation, the very seals and “marks of the LORD JESUS”² in themselves. And gradually hope discerns, breaking through the darkness, rays of the unutterable splendour, “the joy,” for which, when “set before Him,” He “endured the cross, despising the shame,”³ into which He hath entered, and is “set down at the right hand of the throne

¹ Col. i. 24.² Gal. vi. 17.³ Heb. xii. 2.

of GOD," which they too look to share with Him through His love and infinite merits, when "this bitterness of death," which "is but for a moment," is past for ever. In this hope through His grace they strive more and more willingly to "take up their cross daily and follow Him;"¹ for it is written; "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."²

There are reasons lying in the depths of the mind of GOD, why moral natures like our own, which have fallen, can be restored only through long patient discipline and trial. It should be enough to satisfy us of this stern necessity, and reconcile us to the unavoidable destiny of such a probation, that the spotless Humanity of the SON of GOD must also pass through the same. "He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him."³ In the world to come we may learn in the light of His countenance the profound interpretation and cause of this unspeakable mystery. Enough for us now to know, that perfect Wisdom subjected Himself to be rejected by His own fallen creatures; perfect Virtue to be condemned; perfect Love to be hated; perfect Strength to faint for thirst; perfect Beauty to be marred "more than any man;" perfect Gentleness to be scourged; the Source of Life Himself to die; the Majesty of Heaven to expire as a malefactor. If this was so, we may well be content to be at rest, while we bow our head to our light burden, while

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 24.

² 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

³ Heb. v. 8.

we mount the hill, and lay in order, as GOD wills, the very wood of the altar of burnt-offering, while we yield one member after another, one and another sensitive organ of our frame, to be bound with cords, "bringing every thought into obedience to CHRIST," and lie still and commit ourselves wholly to GOD, waiting in assured faith that He Who smites can also heal, He Who demands the sacrifice can transform it into an everlasting memorial of thanksgiving, assured that at last the voice shall be heard from heaven: "By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee," "because thou hast obeyed My voice."

What misery it will be at last to feel that when the Hand of Eternal Love would chasten us, we fretted; that when Infinite Mercy had sacrificed Itself for us, we made no response of a like mind; when all-gracious Wisdom planned the way of our perfection, we would not trust Him; when our God went before us, feeling the keenest edge of the knife of agony, we refused to bear even the lightest touch of pain; while He had none to console Him, even the FATHER forsaking Him, we could not accept our burden of loneliness in patience. Such misery we may surely avert, for He hath promised that He will not lay on us more than His grace will enable us to bear. But whatever our choice, or our life, may be, the conditions of the promises of GOD stand sure and immoveable, and the word is written by which at last our destiny shall be determined; "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the

hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him My new name.”¹ It is only to steadfast faithfulness, persevering in obedience to the calls which test our renewed strength, that the reward is given. And the sternness of the trial, which at once tests and deepens our faith, is but one expression of the highest love ever seeking to draw away the reluctant heart to fix it wholly upon Himself. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.”²

¹ Rev. iii. 10—12.

² Rev. iii. 19.

Malcolm Anderson, Jan. 3. 1862.

SERMON XVII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

MAL. III. 3.

“HE SHALL SIT AS A REFINER AND PURIFIER OF SILVER.”

THE text is an instance of the frequent usage of Holy Scripture, to express the profoundest truth by familiar illustrations. It represents one occupied in refining silver ore, watching, and regulating the action of fire on the mass of metal, and directing the process, till the metal has reached the desired stage of purity. Under this image is symbolised the whole course of the sanctification of the elect, until, through the searching discipline of God, they attain the perfection to which they are predestined.

The words occur in the last Prophet of the Mosaic dispensation, towards the close of his prophecy, and they reveal the momentous change then about to ensue in the dealings of God with man. During the Mosaic dispensation the favour of God was marked by earthly prosperity. The sitting every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree, a full home, length of days, rich harvests, rest from their enemies,—were the ideas presented during that

period to the faith even of the Saints, as signs of the Presence and love of God. So deeply had these ideas of temporal peace and abundance entered into the minds of the chosen people, that they rejected CHRIST, because they could not reconcile suffering with their preconceived views of the MESSIAH. To inspired men, looking through the special illuminations of the HOLY GHOST beyond the veil of the Mosaic dispensation, a truer view was unfolded, and they, like Abraham in earlier days, "rejoiced to see" through humiliation and death the "Day" of CHRIST, and were "glad."¹ But the commandments and ordinances, the symbols and covenants, of the Mosaic dispensation were so intermingled with temporal promises, so identified with them in the minds of the people, that they were offended at the representations of the mortified life which the New Testament revealed as the chosen mode in which the grace of God is perfected. The cause of this obscurity it is not difficult to understand.

It is a law in the history of the Divine revelations, that until the grounds on which a truth rests have an actual existence, the truth itself cannot ordinarily be apprehended. Thus, e. g., the doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead was but dimly revealed in the Old Testament, because the reasons and principles of the Resurrection had no being. Our LORD's Resurrection was the beginning and living cause of the Resurrection of the dead; and not until this momentous event occurred, was the doctrine "brought to light,"² and implanted in the conscience of man as a fixed idea, a principle of life. In like manner mortification as a means of

¹ S. John viii. 36.

² 2 Tim. i. 10.

purifying humanity from its corruption, could only be dimly foreshadowed, while its ground and living cause had no actual existence. The change ensued through our LORD's Passion. His Passion is as truly the cause and principle of the purification of our nature through mortification and trial, as His Resurrection is the groundwork and image of our bodies being raised from the grave. And as our resurrection was but dimly apprehended before the Resurrection of our LORD, even so the mortified life of the Saints was not understood before the Passion. Even during the times of the last of the Prophets, the grace of suffering was a vision of the future, not an already existing fact. He saw it and described it as what should be hereafter, not as a result then realised. "He *shall* sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." It was still a future, not a present, revelation.

Our LORD's Passion has caused an entire revolution in the experiences and views of mankind. As the Cross, once an object accursed, associated with the basest and most revolting ideas, is now elevated among material forms to be the object of highest reverence; even so suffering in the flesh, from being regarded as the mark of Divine displeasure, is become a means of closest union with God, a seal of His love, a law of highest sanctity. Humiliation and suffering were once dissociated from God, as irreconcilable ideas. They are now so indissolubly united with Him, that as we have no true idea of God, except through the manifestation of Himself in the Flesh, so we have no idea of His manifestation in the Flesh separate from humiliation and suffering. As the Incarnation of God has given to

humanity a glory which raises it above all created natures, so the suffering life through which the all-holy Humanity was perfected, has given to mortification in its true form, a meaning and an effect which constitute it the most necessary discipline, and highest expression of human perfectness. The world struggles against this truth, because it is its condemnation. The flesh resists it, and will resist it to the end, because it is its death. But the Temptation in the Wilderness, the Agony in the garden, the Ascent of Calvary, the expiring on the Cross, have left an impression on the spiritual world, have embodied an idea of human life, and given a direction to human thought, which can never be effaced, but must spread and deepen, in proportion as man becomes capable of apprehending the laws of the restoration of his nature in CHRIST.

Nor are the points of the Passion to be regarded merely as facts in the world's history, to which we look back as to a past event. As the sacrifice of our LORD on the Cross is perpetuated in a real representation in the oblation of the Eucharist, Himself being present, and by His Presence giving a reality to our oblation, even so, though after a different mode of mystery, by vital union with His members, the acts of His Passion impart a new life and supernatural virtue to the multiform phases of trial through which He chastens and purifies His elect. He Who now sits as a Refiner and Purifier, has Himself been in the very same furnace of fire. He is still, by His grace, present within all trial. All true forms of a mortified life, wherever they are found in the members of His Body, are still the very "marks of the LORD JESUS."¹ All true sor-

¹ Gal. vi. 17.

row bears a special likeness to Himself. There is a community of life with its secret bonds of sympathy running throughout all redeemed humanity, connecting every act of patient endurance with the suffering life of the Son of Man, Himself to the end of time reproducing by His grace faint images of His own amazing Sorrow, that Its virtue may be imparted for the same end that was accomplished in Himself, that they, whom loving He chasteneth, suffering with Him, may with Him be perfected.

The laws which regulate our purification move along two different lines, each having its counterpart in the Passion of our LORD.

I. One form of spiritual chastening is found in the internal discipline, the self-imposed effort involving secret pain, with which the soul, strengthened by the grace of God, subdues its natural emotions in meeting and overcoming trial.

It is one of the remarkable proofs of the true Humanity of our LORD, that although sinless, and undisturbed by the least swerving of His will, He nevertheless experienced the pain which accompanies the sacrifice of inward feeling. We may trace in the history of His Passion the working of His Soul's inner life under this aspect. How peculiarly touching is it to observe the manifest pressure with which, as His whole manner shows, He restrained His inward emotions, when He commenced His last journey to Jerusalem, His foreseen death being now close at hand. "And it came to pass," thus S. Luke describes the scene, "when the time was come, that He steadfastly set His Face to go to Jerusalem."¹ "Steadfastly set His Face,"—the words ex-

¹ S. Luke ix. 51.

press the action of one who sees before him some vision from which he shrinks, and exerts all his energies with calm resolve to meet it. Again, when speaking to "certain Greeks"¹ that desired to see Him, of His approaching death, how remarkable an insight do His words convey, unconsciously as it were, of the innermost workings of His Soul in its communion with the FATHER. In the midst of a prophecy in which He foretells the blessed fruits of His Passion, He says, as though simply musing with Himself; "Now is My Soul troubled, and what shall I say? FATHER, save Me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour."² It would seem that the inward weight of suffering found a permitted solace in the utterance of intense emotion; first the questioning with Himself whether to offer a prayer for relief; and then the instant self-restraint in the renewed resolution to consummate the awful sacrifice. A similar transition of natural human feeling is manifest during the Agony. The unutterable depression,—“My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,”—is followed by the desire for support in the sympathy of those nearest to His Heart; “Tarry ye here, and watch with Me.” Then under the amazing burden, in the complete sinking of His human nature, there is felt the desire for relief, the thought of the possibility of relief even at the last moment, of some change which might lighten the inexpressible anguish. “He fell on His Face, and prayed, saying, My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” But immediately the thought is suppressed in the re-assertion of the will accepting the fulness of the dreadful dis-

¹ S. John xii. 20.² S. John xii. 27.

tress without any alleviation ; “ Nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt ;”¹ the shrinking human will for a while longing, pleading for escape, and then again strengthening itself in the resolve, which had known no change, although at one time shaken by the overwhelming darkness and horror, rather strengthening itself the more through the trial to which it was subjected. And then, the struggle past, there is manifested the calm steadfast patience, the might of unconquerable energy, with which He arises to meet the band of soldiers and the traitor, prepared, no more shrinking back, to endure even to the end the sufferings that awaited Him, the Soul, which had been overwhelmed in the anticipation of the trial, re-invigorated to meet it, when it actually came upon Him.

I do not dwell on the mysterious greatness exhibited, or its results, or the infinite Love that inspired the self-sacrifice, but on the example which is thus set before us of self-discipline, the inner movements of the soul experiencing to the utmost the weakness of the flesh, while manifesting the highest possible expression of an obedient will under deepest trial.

Our sin is that our desires wander without limit, that our imagination ranges unchecked beyond the bounds of possibility, that our affections fasten themselves according to natural impulse, without reference to the will of God. To suppress such desires, to chasten such imaginations, to mortify such affections, to be patient and unselfish under disappointment and resistance, is accompanied with

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 37—39.

pain and effort ; and from effort and pain we shrink. Even with the grace of GOD prevailing in us, the struggle to submit the strong elements of our nature, and the self-subdual required to sustain the struggle, is as a furnace of fire. Perversity and independence of mind clinging to its own self-chosen way, or the softness of self-love abhorring mortification, or the slothful tendency to ease, with failing faith, ever prepared to accept the ready self-excuse,—these and such like hindrances, are found even among the more earnest, restraining and grieving the Eternal Spirit. And yet to nerve our hearts and overcome in the hour of temptation, and choose the higher course, is the very condition of our sanctification.

Our strength is to unite ourselves with our LORD, and to trace in the pathway which His footsteps trod, while suffering for our sake that we might follow Him, the lines along which we too may move forward, and must so move, if we would abide in Him. He has gone before us, and by His footprints marked the successive stages of the inner discipline of the soul, by which to test our faithfulness. We need to quicken our hearts in anticipation of trials which await us as certainly as He was about to enter into trial, when He set His face toward Jerusalem ; to preserve collectedness and communion with GOD by the way, hushing all questionings, quieting all natural emotions, staying our frail spirits in prayer, even as He strengthened His human heart before the hour of His Passion drew near ; and, when our trial-hour comes, to be content, if it be the will of GOD, to see all hopes of sympathy fail, and bear it alone, struggling against longings for change, or the suggestions of the possibility of re-

lief, and subduing the will, till it can accept the whole determined purpose of GOD, as we kneel before Him, drinking in fresh superhuman strength from above, sure thus to feel more than an angel's presence, till we are enabled to arise and overcome all that is against us. The refining and purifying the elect is fulfilled within the secret movements of the soul, as it thus seeks to follow the guidings of the higher will, and to bring every thought as it arises into obedience to CHRIST.

II. The outward circumstances in which we are placed, have moreover their own special office as a further means of spiritual chastening. We are girt about with innumerable influences, from which we cannot escape, which act upon us unceasingly from hour to hour. Let us consider only the influence, whether for good or for evil, which is exercised upon us by our daily intercourse with our fellow-creatures. It would seem that in order to produce the greatest possible happiness for mankind, GOD knit together the individual members of the human race by infinite links of fellowship, and endowed them with capacities of the keenest sensitiveness. By an irresistible law of our nature, we act upon each other's inner life with a continual force, as the pulses of the air act upon the bodily frame. If our natures moved wholly according to the will of GOD, this law of mutual contact and influence would be a source of perpetual bliss, through the infinite reflections of common elements of joy passing and repassing to and fro between the thousand times ten thousand hearts like to our own, ever drawing one common life from GOD. This is one beatitude

of the communion of Saints. The fall has left us our close contact one with another; it has left us our mutual sensitiveness. There remain, blessed be the name of God, manifold forms of loving intercourse and tenderest sympathies, gleams of a better world, or rather lingerings of a once better earthly state, tokens of what might have been man's abiding paradise, and of what will be his lot hereafter in them that are saved. But the fall has caused that close fellowship, that keen sensibility, which were to have been the rich enhancement of every pure joy, to be the occasions of a searching discipline, and oftentimes the aggravations of suffering, in proportion to the prevalence of sin and the multiform workings of our common infirmity.

Our LORD's Passion was the result of the combination of the two sources of trial, the internal and the external, meeting together in one accumulated distress, the burden of the weakness of His Humanity, and the pressure of evil from without; and this not merely from the hands of wicked men, to whom He was "delivered up," but also from the faults and infirmities of the faithful companions of His daily life. This became a necessity when He took a created nature. Independently of the special acts of the Passion, and the dreadful details of the last sacrifice, the continual influences of a fallen disordered state pressed upon Him in all His communications with the creature, acting upon every nerve of His sensitive Humanity, perfect in its sensibilities as in all its organs of being.

Such trials of daily occurrence are the lot common to man, for all communications with the world are sources of temptation. There are heavier trials

which fall, as God wills, for special chastenings, breaking in upon the ordinary course of life, as the storms of the material world disturb its wonted order. There are darker sins and wilder disorders from the effects of which we may in some degree guard ourselves, as from the extremities of heat and cold. Persecution, in the sterner sense of the term, except in the rarest cases, is not the condition of our own day. But our sensibility to trial is coextensive with our communications with society, and the organs and workings of our nature; and the lesser forms of trial which are around us, as the impalpable air we breathe, form, because of their closeness and their constancy, the more pervading and more searching discipline. The whole order of the world, because of its manifold imperfections, is become a means of spiritual discipline. The anxieties and weariness of our daily work, the faults of our daily companions, disappointments or opposition even in our schemes of benevolence, the pressure of responsibility, the failure of sympathy where we had surely looked to find it, the passing away of fond dreams and imaginings, the defects clinging to objects of fondest love or most ardent admiration—these and other like manifestations universally accompanying our disordered and imperfect state, have their office in the Providence of God to chasten us, by as certain a law as that which determines His more direct judgments. It is long before we understand that evils arising from no fault of our own, that the sins and infirmities of other men, are part of God's appointed discipline intended to act as a special chastening for the attainment of the higher forms of sanctity. We readily perceive,

that it is a righteous thing to suffer the consequences of our own faults, and to be patient under our own infirmity. We are large in our expectations, that others should bear with us, and are provoked if they fail in considerateness for our imperfections. We are angry if they are imperfect, indignant if they do not sympathise with us even in our most trifling annoyances. We can discern in them the least fault, and count it the sufficient justification of uncharitableness or complaint.

But we are slow to apprehend that these “pricks in our eyes, and thorns in our sides”¹ are God’s own instruments, fraught with unspeakable virtue, if we use them aright, for the attainment of great spiritual improvement through the constant patient self-discipline which their endurance requires, even as they are the occasions and provocatives of unceasing sin, if we refuse to bear with others as we need to be borne with ourselves. All external circumstances whether direct from God, or indirect through man, whether from open enemies or dearest friends, whether intended or simply casual, through wilful sin or unavoidable infirmity, are component parts of that furnace, through which our nature is passing, and in which, if at all, our sanctification is to be attained. The scene of our abode, the companions of our ordinary course, the incidental details of our day’s employment, the chance tenour of our leisure hour, even the most passing interruption, the merest accident, or most settled purpose—they form the complex web of a system of discipline by which God, Who rules and shapes them to His own ends, is searching us through and through,

¹ Numbers xxxiii. 55.

constraining us, if we follow His call, to surrender our will in all things to be formed according to His own most perfect Will.

The Son of Man "was in all points tempted, like as we are."¹ These lesser forms of temptation were among the sufferings which He bore; and He "learned obedience by the things that He suffered."² Can we expect that the very laws of sanctification, to which He subjected Himself, can be changed in our case; that we can be spared the light yoke of the daily cross, when He has laid on Himself alone the heavier burden, sparing us where the temptation rises above that which we are able to bear?

Two incidental points result from the imagery employed in the text, to strengthen and encourage the soul in its course of trial. It has been supposed that the custom of the refiner watching the furnace, to see his face reflected on the surface of the burning mass, as the test of its attaining the required purity, was in the Mind of the SPIRIT when selecting this image, to denote the mystery of our sanctification. Such a custom is a beautiful exemplification of the momentous truth, that the object of all spiritual discipline is the restoration of the likeness of God forming again on our frail humanity after a diviner pattern than the first Adam knew, through the mysterious combination of the Divine and human natures in the one Person of Him, after Whose Image we are recreated. The process implies the earnest intent gaze of one sitting with eyes fixed, carefully regulating the

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

² Heb. v. 8.

action of the fire, adapting its force to the special condition of the material on which it acts, increasing or staying it according to his own mind, having at heart the one object of perfecting his work, so that there be no defect, no flaw left to mar the accomplishment of his purpose. Unceasing care throughout the whole course of purification, watchfulness of every detail as the work of refining proceeds, the assurance that the action of trial searching our inmost nature is determined under the command and immediate guidance of One Who "is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities," the certainty that the trial is permitted because it is the needful, the appointed way in which the sanctification of our nature is to be worked out—these truths are implied in the imagery of the text. What a stay to failing faith, when some searching trial presses heavily, to call up before the mind's eye the Form of JESUS bending over, watching the course of our suffering, regulating it after His own will, that through its mysterious influences our sanctity may advance into His own Likeness! And this in every case of trial may surely be our consolation.

The second ground of encouragement is involved in the selection of silver, as the metal best fitted to image forth the substance of humanity as it passes under the discipline of God. Silver in its pure state is the brightest of all metals, and is said to be distinguished in the course of its refining by brilliant coruscations playing around its surface. The symbol conveys the blessed promise of the exceeding glory with which even now humanity is being

clothed, as it passes out of great tribulation, its robes washed white in the Blood of the Lamb. It sustained our LORD in His Passion, to survey the glory of His Ascension. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame."¹ He was so truly human, that He would fain uphold Himself in His hour of trial by feeding on the vision of the glory that would follow. His saints have been sustained in their trials through the same anticipations of their future beatitude; they have lived more in the future than in the present. Their future glory reflects its brilliancy within their present darkness. As upon the bed of death visions of the glory within the veil, and faces and forms of the inhabitants of the world to come, are mysteriously revealed to the eyes of the dying man, and, even in the keenness of his agony, he is wrapt in the anticipated joy; so to the eye of faith sorrow and the discipline of trial become a shrine in which invisible things assume a mysterious nearness; a brightness that is felt, pervades and leavens the soul, foreseeing its predestined joy when the storm is overpast.

It is not uncommon, in the weariness of some prolonged trial, to dwell with longing upon the thought of death; and the anticipation may assume the form of desire after GOD and a better world. It is however most probable, when such an anticipation is cherished in the time of trial, that it arises from the desire, not of GOD, but of relief from the discipline which GOD ordains. It cannot be desire for GOD, unless it be also a desire for increased sanctity; and the desire for the increase of sanctity

¹ Heb. xii. 2.

would rather fear the withdrawal of the discipline, lest the soul lose some increase of purification which God had willed to impart through its means. To desire death as a release from pressing trial, or from mere weariness, is to pervert one of the most sacred instincts of our renewed nature, the grace of hope, which, picturing the rest and light of the Presence of God, is intended to cheer the soul, animating it with power to endure what "is but for a moment," in comparison with the "eternal weight of glory;" shedding the promise of the morrow's brightness upon the clouds of evening. To wish to hasten death, because of its supposed relief from trial, is to lessen the glory of eternity, to diminish the increase of endless joy, and detract from the final beatitude and nearness to God, by losing the increased purity with which a prolonged patience, through the grace of God sanctifying the trial, would have been blessed. Lengthened trial is the perfecting of the grace of our redemption. A deepening sanctity is the proper, the intended fruit of the Divine discipline.

Who can count the loss of withdrawing too soon from the appointed means of grace? Who can measure the consequences of interfering even in the least degree with the ordained movements of the Providence of God? "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the LORD hath promised to them that love Him." We can tell the certainty of blessing promised to faithful endurance. We cannot tell the length of probation involved in the fulfilment of the promise. The meaning and value of the discipline of God will be

¹ S. James i. 12.

known only in that day when the final answer shall be given to the long and anxious questionings, stretching forward into the secret mystery of the revelations of **GOD**, searching to know the final destiny of the redeemed in their place of bliss. "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence come they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of **GOD**, and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and **GOD** shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹

¹ Rev. vii. 13—17.

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SERMON XVIII.

PATIENCE.

REV. xiv. 12.

“HERE IS THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS.”

THE Revelations of S. John are concerned chiefly in detailing the successive trials through which the Church is destined to pass before its final consummation of bliss, together with the ministry of our LORD in heaven, and that of His holy angels, who are engaged in executing the Divine judgments upon the earth. But throughout the scenes in which these mysteries are represented, there runs, as an under-current, the manifestation of one special mark of the life of the saints, one feature of character common alike to all,—the grace of patience.

In one of the earliest visions of this mysterious book, GOD is described hushing to rest “the souls of them that were slain for the Word of GOD, and for the testimony which they held,” who “cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” “White robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said

unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”¹ As the troubled history deepens, in the thirteenth chapter, where occurs the mystery of the Beast, on whose “seven heads” were “the names of blasphemy,”² the Spirit of God pauses to mark the patience sustaining the saints throughout this period of terror. “Here is the faith and patience of the saints.”³ Again, in the following chapter, when the judgment of God had fallen on all who worshipped the beast, the same witness is again recorded of the faithful, “Here is the patience of the saints. Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of JESUS.” Add to these testimonies the last words closing the Book of Revelations, which are ascribed to the faithful, the bride, and intended, we cannot doubt, to be perpetuated as the key-note of the mind of the Church, and they express the same characteristic idea. “Even so, come, LORD JESUS,”⁴ are words of calmest patience, as of one longing for deliverance, yet prepared to endure the appointed trial, even to the end.

We thus trace in the Revelations a progressive developement of this grace. At first there appears a too great eagerness for relief in the souls beneath the altar. This unrest is quieted, and there succeeds a calmness of endurance, even such as the Spirit of God approves. This continues throughout the history; and at last, at the close of the period of probation, there remains only a restful trust,

¹ Rev. vi. 9—11.

² Rev. xiii. 1.

³ Rev. xiii. 10.

⁴ Rev. xxii. 21.

looking for the return of JESUS, but content to wait through all changes, patience having had indeed "her perfect work."¹

This feature of the character of the saints, exhibited in the Revelations, is a true, though faint copy of the same grace manifested in our LORD's life in the holy Gospels, thus marking the resemblance between the original and the derived life of restored Humanity. For what is the Gospel history, but a series of persecutions and trials following the steps of our LORD wherever He moves among His creatures, and on His side meekness undisturbed, and calm endurance, a ministry of unceasing, though unrequited, love, commencing with the Flight into Egypt, and ending with the blow upon His cheek, the Scourging, and the nailing to the Cross? In the two histories, the Divine life of the holy Gospels, and the saintly life of the Revelations, there is an identity of feature, and like circumstances of trial, tending to bring out to view in each case an inward spirit learning obedience through endurance, patience made perfect through suffering; in the one case, GOD voluntarily subjecting Himself to such a course, in order to manifest this grace in our nature; in the other, His saints following His example, and enabled by His grace to attain a likeness to their LORD.

The greatness of this grace of patience, and its predominance in the saintly life, appears from this fact, that it is selected in the Revelations for special record, as a characteristic and primary feature. In one passage two virtues, "the patience and faith of the saints,"² are mentioned; but patience is

¹ S. James i. 4.

² Rev. xiii. 10.

mentioned first. In the other passage, in which the text occurs, after the mention of "the patience of the saints," there is added, "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of JESUS." Thus obedience and faith are combined with patience, but here again patience is first, as though it were the great purpose of the whole course of trial recorded in the Book of the Revelations, to exercise and exhibit this one feature of the saintly character above all others.

Moreover, its singular excellence as a special mark of redeemed humanity, is evidenced by the additional circumstance, that, like "life and immortality," it was "brought to light" only "by the Gospel."¹ It is remarkable how comparatively little we read of patience in the Old Testament. Job, indeed, is selected by S. James as a special example of this grace; "Ye have heard of the patience of Job."² Other saints of the earlier covenant are likewise distinguished for the possession of the same grace, such as those greater ones who "saw the promises afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon earth."³ Moreover, the Psalms continually breathe the spirit of a patient waiting upon God. But these instances are but exceptions to the general tenour of the life of even the more illustrious members of the Church of Israel. The grace is seldom spoken of in the biographies of the Old Testament. Its absence, on the contrary, is constantly recorded, as characterizing the whole people. Impatience and unsteadiness prevail throughout the wanderings in the Wil-

¹ 2 Tim. i. 10.² S. James v. 11.³ Heb. xi. 13.

derness, and the settlement in the Holy Land. They mark the entire history of the times of the Judges. They gave rise to the desire of the people for a kingly rule; and continue ever afterwards hindering the fulfilment of the promises of GOD.

Even the lawgiver of Israel, the man chosen as the truest type, that the earlier dispensation could supply, of the "Prophet" of the better Covenant, known in his day as the meekest man in all the earth,²—even he sinned through impatience, and lost, because of this sin, his hope of entering into the land of promise,³ as though the fulfilment of the covenant turned on the possession of the one grace of patience, the consequences of its loss being exhibited in the very mediator through whom the covenant was given.

The Israelites, therefore, had not before their eyes any constant pattern of this grace, neither was it impressed on their minds as a necessary and characteristic note of sanctity. As they failed to comprehend the idea of a suffering MESSIAH, being unable to connect the thought of the Man of Sorrows with the Omnipotent GOD, even so they could not perceive the profound beauty of patience matured under trial. The one idea lives in the other. The idea of a chastened life perfected in patience, as the highest type of manhood, was first manifested to the world in the Form of the Crucified. The revelation of the mystery of CHRIST was the first real embodiment of the grace of patience. Till CHRIST came, and lived, and died, patience could not have been really apprehended as a truth, as a living reality. This grace was first written in the

¹ Deut. xviii. 15.

² Numb. xii. 3.

³ Numb. xx. 11, 12.

features of the Son of Man. From Him, its only Source and Example, it issued forth. And only by the force of the life of JESUS, did it enter, as a permanent and essential characteristic, into the idea of a Saint, and became a vital feature in the history of the New Covenant.

But patience is not to be viewed merely as a single grace, and the reason of its peculiar prominence in the saintly life of the Revelations is because of its pervading character. It is the nurse, the guarantee and safeguard of all graces. We may conceive the development of grace in unfallen creatures in the heavens without patience, because there is no struggle, no opposition, no hindrance to its growth. We may imagine other worlds in which created natures may be perfected by other means. The fall has occasioned necessities which would not otherwise have been felt. The restoration of moral natures from a state of ruin, proceeds on different laws from those which regulate the gradual progress of beings which have kept their first estate. Our fated condition, the law of our regeneration, is manifest,—that every stage of virtue, every advancement of true life, every growth of the spirit, meets with hindrances, and is obtained through trial, and consequently involves struggle and self-discipline. Patience is the essential correlative of trial in a renewed soul, and, consequently, the essential condition of the very existence of all virtue. It is, if the expression may be used, the stamina of the constitution of the saint, without which there can be neither healthful nourishment, nor proper growth. On this account patience occupies a peculiar posi-

tion in the whole scheme of a saintly life, being the basis or starting point, as well as the perfection, of all other graces.

Thus it is written, "tribulation," i. e., bruising, as grain is bruised by mechanical pressure, "worketh patience," as the first grace to be matured; afterwards "patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of GOD is shed abroad in the heart by the HOLY GHOST Which is given unto us." Here patience occupies a primary place, as the groundwork of subsequent growth. In other passages it assumes a different position. When S. James says; "let patience have her perfect work," it is in order "that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."² And again S. Paul, after enumerating the most memorable examples of faith under the Old Covenant, when applying them for our instruction, singles out the grace of patience as the one which includes all others, as the crowning excellence of the faithful; "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith."³

The grace of patience has a twofold operation. There is the passive, and the active form of the grace. In the Revelations the passive form is more especially exhibited. There the Saints are represented as exposed to the violence of the enemies of GOD, the oppression and horror of sin, the temporary triumph of evil, the direct personal persecution of truth and faith, the prevalence of continued sorrow and death. Some measure of similar trial is

¹ Rom. v. 3.

² S. James i. 4.

³ Heb. xii. 2.

common in all ages, and must exist wherever sin exists, even though the storm of persecution which once swept over the Church has been mercifully stayed. But what more especially touch us in our ordinary life, are the lesser forms of this world's evil, which, as "a continual dropping," penetrate even the most sheltered havens, such as hard or hasty words, cold looks, rough manners, petty expressions of selfishness, inconsiderate judgments, suspicions, unfounded calumnies, ingratitude. Or they may be such as arise within the innermost circles of affection, and nearness of blood, among those who are, or ought to be most dear one to another, from incongruities of taste, or collisions of opinion, or irreconcilable views of the Church's doctrine, or failings of the power of sympathy, misunderstandings, or want of thought; or from mere nervousness, or constitutional reserve, or jarring sensibilities perhaps of bodily frame, where there may be no evil; or from another's tried state through sorrow in which oneself can have no share, and perhaps knows not of. Or again from bereavement which, though there may be entire submission, yet leaves behind a void, saddening and hopeless, a dull consciousness of loneliness which falling on all objects, as a shroud, has deprived them of all their interest; or from daily recurring interruptions, and untoward combinations of many distractions, which from their very littleness are not taken into calculation, and yet from their constancy seem to form an intended part of the Providential order of the world. Or again from what presses yet closer than all, one's own abiding defects, inner irregularities, irritabilities of temper or nerve, a quick sensitiveness, morbid apprehen-

sions, unmeaning fears, variable spirits acted upon by gloomy weather, or straitened circumstances, or bodily uneasiness,—thus oneself tried while bearing others themselves tried, and together bearing the trying pressure of the outer world. Such forms of trial constitute the perpetual draw on the passive patience of the soul from which no states or times are exempt, the very least of which can be habitually hushed to rest, and overcome, only by the action of a mind trained by the grace of GOD to live above itself, and above the world.

There is again the grace of active patience, which enters into the texture of a religious life as deeply as the passive form. It is remarkable how in the LORD'S Prayer every petition implies a work of patience to attain it. Its petitions do not regard grace simply as the gift of GOD, irrespective of effort, or toil on our own part. "Hallowed be Thy Name:" constant care and thought to preserve reverence in the things of GOD is here involved. "Thy kingdom come:" the whole travail of winning, keeping and training souls is co-extensive with the progress of our LORD'S kingdom. "Thy will be done;" implies the whole life of obedience. "Give us this day our daily bread:" the law of unceasing labour for our support is here understood. "Forgive us our trespasses;" expresses a hope which cannot be realized unless we forgive others; and forgiveness involves the constant effort to overcome resentment, jealousy, unlovingness. "Lead us not into temptation;" can be fulfilled only if we continually watch and strive against the assaults

of the tempter, and the occasions of sin. "Deliver us from evil;" carries with it, as an essential condition, the whole long sore struggle against sin ever rising up to assert, and reassert, its once unquestioned mastery. The prayer framed for our constant use by One Who knew man's destiny, proves that, according to His mind, the spirit of prayer and the grace of patience are coincident, living or decaying together. We cannot ask of God, but we are instantly laying on ourselves a necessity for effort and a pledge of perseverance. We lift our heart in prayer, and there comes to us a voice which says, "Canst thou by patient continuance in well-doing, strive after this which thou desirest?" We long for the possession of some high grace, and we are involved at once in a stern struggle with new, unexpected temptations. We devote ourselves to do some great work for God, and lo! there arises one demand after another for long-suffering toil, under which we are continually ready to sink. It is in each one who longs to be thus supremely blessed, the repetition of Jacob's wrestling, with the same need of strong continued effort through the long darkness, the patient resolve which will not let go the hold, till the breaking of the day, till the blessing at last come.¹ It is the continuance of the effort on which the success depends. Nothing comparatively is more easy than to begin to do some great work for God, or to resolve on some high aim. The excitement, the novelty, the freshness, the first ardour of the awakened soul, it may be, the praise and gratulation around us, tend to produce an exhilaration of spirit which bears one over

¹ Gen. xxxii. 26.

all obstacles and disregards all fears. There is the feeling at the time that this first energy cannot abate, that all will be as smooth, as easy to the end. But no real test of singleness of heart is found in this early stage of effort. It is afterwards, as weariness and change, and unexpected obstacles and disappointments, are experienced; as the glow of imagination subsides, and the dream is chastened by actual realities; as the unceasing call for effort and self-sacrifice presses day after day, then only the real testing comes. It is patience in sustaining the first aim, that proves the soul's true abiding life.

This grace of perseverance specially characterized S. Luke. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia: *only* Luke is with me."¹ But it is an essential characteristic of true life. Neither our LORD nor His Apostles attributed much weight to the first zeal of a renewed soul. Our LORD rather warned His followers against its dangers. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?"² This question implied a check to the first fervid desires for high places in the kingdom of God. Our LORD's promises were made to patient endurance. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My FATHER hath appointed unto Me."³ And again: "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."⁴

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 10.

² S. Matt. xii. 22.

³ S. Luke xxii. 28.

⁴ S. Matt. x. 22.

There are mainly three conditions required, in order to the attainment of the grace of patience.

I. Learn to look on all trying circumstances from the true point of view. The first and most natural view of them is, that they destroy our ease. The sense of injury or annoyance, the soreness at the unkindness or disappointment,—this occupies us, and the one longing is, that the cause of pain may be removed, that at any cost we may be freed from the unwelcome pressure. Thence arises the restless impatience which is the source of some of our worst temptations. We need to rise above this estimate of trial, to look at it on a different side, to view it as GOD views it. As in mounting a hilly range, when looking down from a higher eminence on points which were above us as we commenced the ascent, their aspect is altogether changed, from the mere effect of change in our point of view; so we need to rise above the first appearance of the trial, above the mere temporary effects, separating from it the selfish aspect, the idea of injury, or hardship, or personal annoyance; to rise high enough to apprehend the Eternal Will regulating it, the love restraining it lest it become heavier than we are enabled to bear, the virtue which GOD intended to work in us by its means. We need to learn the view which Joseph was enabled to take of his sore banishment, and unjust imprisonment, and long separation from all natural ties: “Now it was not you that sent me hither, but GOD.” “Now be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for GOD did send me before you, to preserve life.”¹ Or rather we need to view our trials,

¹ Gen. xlv. 8, 5.

as our Blessed LORD looked upon His Passion. He was speaking of the results of His Passion, when He said: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself,"—not I suffer, but—"I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth;"¹ though His sufferings were the chosen instruments of His sanctification. We should cease to dwell on external aspects of the dispensations of God, the darkness, and thick clouds, the thunders and lightnings, which surround the mount, but to ascend higher and abide with Moses and the elders within the cloud, to see the inner light, the meaning of the mystery, as God reveals Himself, as He talks with His elect face to face within the cloud, as "a man speaketh unto his friend."²

Two profound, though simple, truths need to be apprehended in every trying incident, in every fault of another's affecting us, in even the least untoward distraction. It is God's will that it should happen, that it should happen in this, and not in another way. The trial itself may not, the matter of it may not have been of God; no fault of the creature can be of God. But that it should so happen to us, is of God; it is His permission, if not His own original purpose. And secondly, the trial is intended by God to be the means of chastening our soul, of increasing the saintliness of our regenerate life.

2. The first condition is merely a mode of thought, a view, a habit of looking at the movements of the Providence of God in one way rather than another. There is a condition yet more difficult, that is to be

¹ S. John xvii. 19.

² Exod. xxxiii. 11.

combined with a true view of trial. This second condition is the self-sacrifice which can surrender inward sensibilities to be chastened, as God wills. It is not that they can ever cease to feel. Unkindness will continue to wound: perpetual exactions will weary: bereavements will make the heart desolate. It is not absence of feeling that constitutes the saint. Torpor is not identical with deadness to the world or to self. Rather the effort is, while having feelings and capabilities of suffering, it may be intensely acute, to let each sense become an oblation to God; to be wounded, to be weary, to be crushed, yet to be without rebellion or murmuring against God, without loss of forbearance or kindness towards man.

There is in this respect a striking difference between the saints of the Old, and the saints of the New Covenant. Take Israel as an example of the former, his name marking him out as a type of his race. What is the expression of his character at the close of a life of trial? With the gentleness of an entire submission, with true faith which always distinguished him notwithstanding his great infirmities, with habitual meekness and endurance, with lovingkindness of natural temperament,—there is yet a tone of complaint and weariness pervading his mind to the last. “Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the years of their pilgrimage.”¹ He had before said: “If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”²

Contrast with the saint of the earlier covenant

¹ Gen. xlvii. 9.

² Gen. xliii. 14.

the mind of S. Paul, after a life of no less trial. "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."¹ Yet Israel lived in his own home surrounded by his family, and S. Paul was a wanderer, leading a single life, in continual peril, subject to varied and unceasing persecution. Yet he adds: "I know both how to be abased, and how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."² He rises into a yet higher strain: "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience."³ Again he describes himself,—though his life is passed "in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings,"—"as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things."⁴ What a marked contrast is discernible between the earlier and the later saint! And what is the cause of the difference? Humiliation and pain, the many trials of humanity, had since the days of Israel acquired a new meaning; they received a virtue and a blessedness unknown before, in the Life and Passion of our LORD. To S. Paul was revealed what was hidden from Israel, and therefore Israel could not make that entire offering of himself, which was the precious endowment of the Apostle. What the Patriarch could not do, the servant of CHRIST could do. We too shall have failed to catch aright the meaning of the life of our LORD, if we strive not to offer up each tender sensibility of our com-

¹ Phil. iv. 11.² Phil. v. 12.³ Rom. v. 3.⁴ 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5, 10.

plex nature to be chastened, to be mortified, to lie still in the Hand of GOD, to will or not to will, as GOD willeth or not willeth, ourselves, our souls and bodies, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is your reasonable service."¹

3. And thus another condition needs always to be kept in view, or the very life of patient self-sacrifice is wanting. It is the habitual study of the life of JESUS, which cherishes, as a reality, a spirit of patience. Who can count the hosts of those who have looked on the Form and Features of the Crucified, to be sustained in pain, to be comforted in bereavement, and have been indeed sustained and comforted; who have sought to make a sacrifice of some too-clinging attachment, and have been enabled; who, after disturbance of soul, have longed to be brought back to peace and love, and restful perseverance, and, as they looked, have been thankful to be made one with Him, Who "was made perfect through suffering."² It is not the mere contemplation of His outward Form. The inner mind of redeemed Humanity communicating with the Heart of JESUS, participates, through His grace, the majesty and rest of a subdued will, the secret joy and power of an entire self-renunciation. The Form of an ineffable patience enters within the soul, and possesses it. No impulse can rise in rebellion before the Face of the Crucified. The life of JESUS, and specially Himself crucified, have therefore ever been the study of the saints. The last words of Love, the silence of the inner communion with the FATHER, the Thirst, the bleeding Wounds, the

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² Heb. ii. 10.

torn Body, the pale Features, the bowed Head, the unutterable peace of the finished Sacrifice, have entered into the consciousness of Humanity, and created ideas of Beauty, of Power, of Rest, of Majesty, unimagined before. To behold and love, to contemplate and remember how He said, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart,"¹ has been ever since the aim of all who have been drawn and given to Him by the FATHER. His warning voice, as He foretold the trials which would test the steadfastness of His elect, is still ever heard; "In your patience possess ye your souls."² The same warning His Apostle perpetuated, to be prolonged even till His return to gather home His faithful ones; "Be patient, for the coming of the LORD draweth nigh."³

¹ S. Matt. xi. 29.

² S. Luke xxi. 19.

³ S. James v. 8.

SERMON XIX.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE.

ROMANS V. 5.

“THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE
HOLY GHOST WHICH IS GIVEN TO US.”

IT has been questioned, whether in this passage the love of God means His love towards us, or our love towards Him. It seems the truest interpretation, to understand the words as embracing both ideas, according to the usage frequent in Scripture, which speaks of the cause and effect as one. Thus, e. g., Holy Scripture speaks of the righteousness of God, meaning both that which He imputes to us, as well as that which He infuses into us. Again, where CHRIST is called our Life, it is meant that He is both life in Himself external to us, the Source of life, and also life in us, which He imparts. In like manner in this passage, the “love of God shed abroad,” or rather “poured forth as a flood,” is both the love which flowing out of the sacred Heart of God embraces us, and also the love which as a reflection, or derived stream, returns back from our renewed heart to God. The expression includes both the Un-

created and the created love, that wherewith the Infinite first loved us, and that wherewith the finite loves, because it has been loved.

An important feature in this text, is the clear distinction which it draws between the Divine gifts, and the Divine Presence out of which they flow. It clearly marks how both exist within us, the love of God, which is the Divine gift, and the HOLY GHOST, the Divine Presence Which is the Source of the gift.

This is not ordinarily apprehended. The influences of God within the soul are ordinarily understood to mean an effect produced by a power external to us, as waves of the air or light are set in motion, and spread from a distant point which has given to them an impulse, and enabled them to produce results in expanding circles beyond the centre of influence. Thus God is pictured as One afar off, shedding forth grace, and grace as some movement or effect of His power reaching our souls from a distant point of the supernatural world.

But this verse, if there were no other leading to the same conclusion, disproves such an explanation of the mystery. It tells us of the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts;" and it also tells us of the "HOLY GHOST Which is given to us." The Source of love, the uncreated energy, and also its fruit, the created energy, the underived and the derived life, are alike in some transcendent mystery equally present in our being. We are the subjects of a twofold mystery, a Divine Indwelling, and a supernatural grace emanating from this Indwelling. We have within us the blessed gift. We have also the Author of the blessed gift. We have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, because

GOD Himself has previously been shed abroad in us. We have that which is the effect of Deity, because we have the very Deity, the Eternal LORD Himself. He is Himself the primal Gift. His grace of love is but the second gift, the consequence, the witness of the former Gift.

This, therefore, is one of those momentous texts which prove the communications of GOD to have passed beyond the sphere of His own Being; that in some unspeakably mysterious Presence He diffuses Himself within the life of His creatures.

The Catholic Church teaches, that from the FATHER by an eternal generation was begotten the only SON, His express Image, and that by an eternal effluence from both the FATHER and the SON proceeded the HOLY GHOST. But did the diffusiveness of the Divine Nature then for ever cease? Has Eternal SPIRIT no going forth beyond Himself? Has He no law of communicating Himself, or the ever-blessed TRINITY no mode of imparting the virtues of the Divine Nature through the HOLY SPIRIT's fellowship with the creatures?

There has been indeed no communication of the Blessed SPIRIT, as there was of the FATHER and the SON. The Three glorious Persons are alone co-equal and co-eternal together. There could be no communications like to those transcendent mysteries which lie beneath the ineffable union of the threefold Personality of the Blessed TRINITY. But the Creation was the result of some mysterious emanation from GOD, and was hallowed by the outpouring of the HOLY GHOST. "The Spirit of GOD moved," or brooded hovering, "upon the face of the waters," and the present form of the material

world was the result. He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and the spirituality of man's nature was the result. He imparts Himself afresh through the Incarnation of the Eternal SON, conveyed by the Sacraments of the Gospel, and a partaking of "the Divine Nature" is the result. By the SPIRIT we receive the all-holy Humanity of the LORD, and by His Humanity His Divine Nature. By the SPIRIT we have access to, we hold communion with, the FATHER, and thus can offer to Him our spiritual sensations, powers, and acts. Love, although the chief, is but one result of the Divine communications, only one measure of the richness of the "unction of the Holy One." We are in our renewed nature in a true sense possessed of a living effluence of the HOLY GHOST; and, being thus shed abroad in our hearts, "the SPIRIT witnesses with," has an inner mode of communicating sensations of a sacred fellowship with, "our spirit, that we are the children of God."² There has thus been a communication to us, which is a reflection, as to the creature only was possible, of the ineffable and transcendent mystery of the communion between the Divine Persons.

II. Again, the text is one of those momentous passages, which declare love to be the most vital and characteristic grace developed in our renewed nature, as the result of our partaking of the Divine Nature. S. Paul, in the passage from which the text is taken, traces the blessedness of a renewed soul through its progressive stages. He speaks, firstly, of its justification by faith, and the effect of

¹ 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

² Rom. viii. 16.

this grace, peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."¹ He then describes the steadfastness of trust which is thus produced; "By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." This steadfastness is accompanied with anticipations of future glory; "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Power also is thus given to rejoice even in suffering; "we glory in tribulations also." This again produces the blessed fruit of a willing acceptance of the discipline of God in trial; for "tribulation worketh patience;" and the result of patience is a deeper insight into the mysteries of the spiritual world; for "patience worketh experience." This growing illumination, moreover, enkindles and deepens hope; for experience fosters a chastened "hope, and hope maketh not ashamed."

But the Apostle afterwards points out the deeper ground of life which underlies these developments of grace, and of which they are in some real sense the effect; and this ground of life is love. Those graces live, "*because* the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." This teaching, with regard to the pre-eminent value and effect of the grace of love, runs throughout the New Testament. If we consider the fruits of the SPIRIT, the first that is mentioned is love. "The fruit of the SPIRIT is love joy, peace," &c.² Again, the knowledge of God without love is impossible. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God."³ Again, the measure of forgiveness is determined by love. "Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much."⁴ Again,

¹ Rom. v. 1—5.

² Gal. v. 22.

³ 1 S. John iv. 8.

⁴ S. Luke vii. 47.

even martyrdom, if without love, would have no acceptableness. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."¹ Again, the most lavish generosity is of no avail without love. "Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."² Again, even faith, to which elsewhere all life is ascribed, is only true faith, if it "worketh by love."³ Again, love alone releases from fear. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear."⁴ Again, the whole moral law embodies itself in love, as its true developement. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."⁵ Again, love alone is the assurance of our soul's being united with God. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."⁶ Again, love alone is declared to be the bond which knits the soul with the whole threefold Personality of the Blessed TRINITY. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."⁷

It follows from this remarkable position which love occupies in the Divine life, that whatever other virtue enters into our nature, this grace of love is needed to give it a Christian character. This caution requires specially to be laid to heart, because of our great liability to be absorbed by what is immediately pressing on our hearts, and thus suffering love to be lost. In the common intercourse of life, we may readily see how want of love arises often

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.² 1 Cor. xiii. 3.³ Gal. v. 6.⁴ 1 S. John iv. 18.⁵ Rom. xiii. 10.⁶ 1 S. John iv. 16.⁷ S. John xiv. 23.

from mere thoughtlessness. Persons not naturally selfish or unloving will act as if they were so. The solution of the inconsistency is, that they are at the time wholly absorbed in some keen interest; some vivid idea has possessed them, and their mind is filled with a train of thought along which they are borne, without the self-restraint enabling them to weigh aright their actions, or the effects of their actions upon others. They have thus suffered love, not perhaps to wax cold, but to cease to act. It still breathes within them, and might be kindled into even passionate life by a single touch; but its warmth, its motions are suspended for a while. They have committed this great error; they have let their strength go forth in some fond pursuit, without remembering the necessity of cherishing love as the primal grace without which all acts must be fraught with evil. From our feebleness, it is difficult to preserve at the same time two earnest ideas equally prominent in our minds. If we are eager in one object, we lose our care for another; our keenness in one direction hinders our attention to all else. The care of love is omitted in our care for the many objects that excite us.

This defect often enters fatally into religion. Take an instance from a special danger of the present day. Our zeal for the Catholic truth may be an occasion of sin, from this faulty liability of our nature. The very greatness of the Truth, its demand for our keenest faculties to apprehend it, the transcendent interest attaching to it, our momentous responsibility in having to witness for it, the intense delight of giving utterance to its inspirations, the opposition it meets with, provoking this

eagerness all the more,—all tend to generate such an engrossing force within, such a burning fire, ever ready to break forth, that theological hatred has become a proverb of reproach, and the language used of opponents, even of those in authority who hinder what is believed to be the truth, is sometimes especially bitter. It is not that man, dealing with divine truth, is worse than man dealing with any other truth, or that he is more exposed to loss of grace in holding it ; but it is because divine truth is so much deeper than any other truth, because it lays hold of more vital passions, is so much more absorbing and eventful, and therefore our liability to intemperance so much greater. The tendency to lose calmness, consideration, and self-command, and so to forfeit the grace of love, increases with the increase of excitement which is stirred by its intense interest. Its very beauty and preciousness, its engrossing power in gathering into itself all the impulses of the soul, becomes our snare. Our soul is feeble at the same time to cherish the breathings of love, and to witness a bold, and righteous confession of the truth of GOD. The greater zeal needs the greater love. The fact of being deeply interested in any pursuit, or eager about any truth, is therefore in itself a warning to kindle with redoubled care the flame of charity.

III. Love has two special modes of being, which seem to a superficial eye to be inconsistent. Love is known both by its rest and its activity. What we experience in natural love, is a type of what is found in love divine. Our natural soul is restless, till it finds an object to love and is conscious of being loved in return. When it finds a satisfying object

which responds to its own desires, it is at rest. But when the soul is thus at rest in love, it becomes capable of developing a degree of energy, an indifference to consequences, which no other feeling can excite. It is the same in love towards GOD. Let the soul apprehend a reconciled FATHER in CHRIST, and after the troubled fears of a burdened conscience receive the consciousness of an unutterable peace. Let it perceive through the beauty and joy of the outer world, the higher beauty and joy that there must be in the Creator of all this created beauty and joy. Let it see in the Incarnate GOD a picture of spiritual Beauty, which fills it with admiration and delight. Let it see in the love of the FATHER giving up His only SON, and in the love of the SON giving up Himself, a depth of love passing knowledge. The result is a spiritual content unknown before, and at the same time a spring of active service in the cause of GOD giving a new character to the whole after life. Our LORD implies this connexion between the peaceful rest of love, and the developement of spiritual energy, when after drawing from S. Peter the expression of renewed trustful love, "LORD, Thou knowest that I love Thee," He impressed on him the awful charge of life-long, apostolic labour, "Feed My sheep."¹ And, again, S. Paul shows his own consciousness of the intimate dependence of his spiritual energy on divine love, when he exclaims; "I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD."²

¹ S. John xxi. 16.² Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Other passages of S. Paul's Epistles show how love was to him at once the profoundest repose, and the most intense energy of active life. This twofold effect of love is the explanation of the remarkable passage, where he describes his life as an alternation between passionate self-abandonment and calm restraint, the two apparent extremes by grace become consistent. "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to GOD, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; *for the love of CHRIST constraineth us.*"¹

The order of renewed life is here evident. The sense of being loved, of being loved by GOD, loved with such love as that wherewith CHRIST loves, fills the soul; and a responsive love is kindled. Then peace which passeth all understanding, which is the sustaining ground of calm sobriety, and a longing to devote the life thus restored to His service from Whom its blessedness flows, absorb all other thoughts. In S. Paul, such love moved to life-long self-sacrifice one to whom power was given to subdue worlds. But the same result is everywhere manifest, the same law of life prevails wherever the same love is "shed abroad in the heart by the HOLY GHOST," though its workings may be exhibited only in commonest details of life.

Such love was manifestly intended to penetrate and leaven Christian intercourse in all its complex relations. It is remarkable how the idea of mutual active love has moulded the ordinary language of society; how forms of courtesy and modes of address are framed to express a real personal interest in the welfare of others, an anxiety of active kindness towards all. If they were real, and the feelings,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 13.

which they embody, actually existed ; if they ceased to be mere conventional terms, and were animated by charity adequate to their outward expression, it would change the face of the world. Surely it is one point which every day startles and shocks us as to the unreality of life. But are the expressions too strong ? Not so. They are conceived according to a true idea, they are entirely consistent with the idea of Christian brotherhood, an image of the Communion of Saints. But the lack of the adequate life to sustain their truth from within, has caused the hollowness which has become our condemnation. Love exists only in sincerely wishing the good of others. Love grows by continually giving out of itself, not by receiving. And with such desires love must needs ever strive to accomplish the utmost that human energy can effect, or human patience can endure, towards all to whom love is due. Human language has sought to express what a true instinct teaches, and remains as a witness what our sympathy or our desire would be, if love were perfected. To sympathize ; to be really sorry or glad because of another's calamity or success ; to be not one's own, but another's, to do him service ; to pray for a blessing on each one whom we address ; to recognize a real relationship of brotherhood, not of blood merely, but of grace,—which are the convictions expressed in the conventional forms of human language, are but the truthful impulses of life between members within the Body of CHRIST.

It is not indeed meant, as an every-day call, that we should “lay down our lives for the brethren,”¹

¹ 1 S. John iii. 16.

although at all times love may still exact such a claim. But the same spirit should respond to the ceaseless calls, arising hour after hour, to feel for others' evils or infirmities, to console or aid at the moment of need, to watch for opportunities as they arise of doing kindly services, even at one's own loss or inconvenience, to mean all one says, to fulfil what one professes,—and all this with an unction of tenderness, which is of the mind of CHRIST, because the soul loving GOD has for His sake learnt to “love his brother also.” The possession of such love is the one and only sign which our LORD gave, by which the world might recognize the true elect. “By this shall all men know, that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”¹ Our LORD's words imply that our habitual tone of intercourse should be thus leavened, that this grace thus binding His disciples together should be active, earnest; for how otherwise could it be a mark known of all men? And His own love must have been the type that was on His Mind, as He spoke, to reproduce it in the world; that thus the enlarged communion of His members should be for ever the image of the first fellowship of the few disciples whom He had drawn around Him. But now iniquity has abounded, and, as the further fatal consequence, “the love of many,” even of the more faithful, has waxed cold. He foresaw² this failure of His own longing desire, this grievous hindrance to the full results of His Incarnation and Atonement. But His foreboding words prove, how this coldness and lack of love may be remedied in oneself. It is as we become pure from sin, that we become also pure

¹ S. John xiii. 35.

² S. Matt. xxiv. 12.

“from the blood of all men.” As we put away more and more every remaining fault that poisons the springhead of our affections, our impulses and desires, love flows more fervently, more free from self, spreads further beyond the immediate circle in which self is centred, more as our LORD loved, more in unison with His Heart. The intimate connexion between personal sanctity and love to man, is manifest in the exhortation of S. Paul; “Grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of GOD, as dear children, and walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet smelling savour.”¹

And so, again, love is the moving force in works of mercy. Love is the source of power, and of tenderness which gives to power its influence over human hearts. It is the special grace to which perseverance is attached, overcoming sloth and weariness, and by its magic charm transforming even what is painful, or repulsive to the natural sense, into occasions of increasing thankfulness. Love is continually enlarging its sphere of interest; its desires and efforts of service ever drawing within its reach fresh objects for self-sacrifice, and discovering fresh needs for its exercise in the same

¹ Ephes. iv. 30—32; v. 1, 2.

objects. Love moved the Divine Nature to create, and contemplated with delight all things which It created. "And GOD saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good."¹ Love, when man had fallen from his high estate, accomplished the sacrifice which had power to restore the fallen. "GOD so loved the world, that He gave His Only-Begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."² Love has ever borne with the unthankful, the wayward, the impenitent, waiting for the convenient season, yielding to the will of His own creatures, that He may by all means save some. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."³ Love weeps with frustrated longings at the final loss of those for whom the last Sacrifice is offered in vain. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"⁴ Love in man towards his fellow man is to be the reflex of this unsparing effort to bless, this unruffled tenderness even towards the disobedient; this unwearied, persevering desire to win, hoping even against hope. It is of active, self-sacrificing service, in imitation of our LORD, that the Scripture speaks, when we are enjoined; "Walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us, and given Himself for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to GOD for a sweet-smelling savour."⁵ And of the same call to works of mercy, S. Paul again speaks; "By love serve one another; for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love

¹ Gen. i. 31.² S. John iii. 16.³ Jer. xxxi. 3.⁴ S. Matt. xxxiii. 37.⁵ Ephes. v. 12.

thy neighbour as thyself.”¹ And as the Love of CHRIST is the animating principle of works of mercy, so His love, ever increasing towards one who thus follows Him, is the blessed recompense of all service, Himself returning a grateful love as our debtor. “For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”²

The whole array of works of mercy, spiritual and corporal, rest for their true exercise on these simple, though eternal laws, issuing out of the Love of CHRIST, and into His Love again returning to create fresh motives and occasions of love, and uniting all acts and thoughts of mutual care, whether affecting the soul or the body, in one common energy of Divine charity, of which CHRIST is to us at once the Source and the exceeding great Reward. Love is its own sufficient recompense; its very actings even upon the unworthy and the unthankful, are in themselves full of consolation. What then will their superadded recompense be? And if “whosoever giveth a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward,”³ what shall be the recompense of one whose life has become a perpetual effort to bless, even as he himself has been blessed, to give as he has received, to spare nothing, even as GOD spared not for him His own SON, and with Him freely giveth all things?

¹ Gal. v. 13.² S. Matt. xxv. 35, 36, 40.³ S. Matt. x. 42.

SERMON XX.

THE EXAMPLE OF S. MARY THE VIRGIN.

S. LUKE I. 38.

“AND MARY SAID, BEHOLD THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD; BE
IT UNTO ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.”

THE eternal generation of the SON of GOD lies in the innermost depths of the Divine Nature, into Which no created understanding can ever hope to penetrate. His human generation is more within our reach, because It was like to our own. He is as truly the Son of a Woman, as He is the SON of GOD. But of all the mysteries of our being none is greater than the communication of life from parent to child; and there is this additional ground of mystery in the human generation of our LORD, that we can contemplate it only in part, only, as it were, on one side. As we try to apprehend the beginning of His human life, we are lost in the Divine Presence Which enfolded it. The secrecy of His human Conception deepens at once into the still greater mystery of the overshadowing of the “power of the Highest” in the union of the Humanity with the uncreated Word. “The Word was made flesh;”

i.e., the flesh which He took became at once the Flesh of the Eternal Word by a generation preserving the laws of our nature, though overruled and quickened by the mysterious working of GOD the HOLY GHOST. The Flesh was assumed, not by the Divine Presence in the mystery of His Indwelling of which the Saints partake, but by the Person of GOD. He at once and for ever took the flesh as part of Himself, in an indissoluble union. The flesh thus entered into the glory which had previously surrounded the God-head alone, sharing it so far as to the created nature was possible.

So amazing is the mystery, that, as we seek to grow into its greatness, the instrumentality through which it was effected fades in comparative insignificance from our view. It is in Itself Life. How It became Life, is in the comparison as nothing. And yet we are to regard the work of GOD in all its parts, and ought therefore to contemplate the means of effecting the mystery of the Incarnation, as well as the mystery itself. But in so doing we have to bear in mind the opposite tendencies which have developed themselves within the Church, both of which it becomes us carefully to avoid. As there is a tendency to exalt too far the Instrument through which the Incarnation was accomplished, so on the other hand, while dwelling only on the transcendent Truth Itself, there is a tendency to overlook one whom GOD has pre-eminently honoured and blessed. This would be to err, as the former course is to err, and would entail loss in the spiritual life. GOD might have formed a Body for His SON out of the dust, or as a fresh creation out of nothing; and so have made it wholly His own

work, concentrating all attention on Himself. When, on the contrary, He associated one of the fallen race with Himself in the creation of the Human Nature of His SON, so that our LORD took not merely a created nature, but also the sacred relation of the child of a human parent, He must have meant that we should associate the chosen vessel of His grace with Himself in our commemorations. And our very Creed would lose part of its deep mystery, if we separate the Mother from the Child; for through their union flow all the relations of which we in our measure partake, and which gives to every member of His Body the true character of a Brotherhood with the LORD. We should not be truly of one Flesh and one Blood with Him, but that He took His Flesh and Blood from the loins of a Mother of the same race. Neither would it be the very same nature which had sinned, which was also redeemed, had He not received His humanity from one of the daughters of the fallen. The Church has therefore been careful to preserve in connexion with the Incarnation of our LORD, a reverential memory of His Mother, even as she herself by inspiration foretold; "All generations shall call me blessed." Two days are set apart for her special commemoration in union with the acts of the Incarnation, thus ever connecting her with our LORD. And thus she lives distinguished above all Saints, not merely because of her surpassing sanctity, but because of the glory which she has received, "beyond an Archangel's dream," the amazing destiny of bearing within her womb, and at her breasts, the weight of Deity; of giving her very flesh and blood to become God's very Flesh and Blood, to be the

source of life to all humanity ; of having felt, and still ever feeling, a Mother's peculiar bond towards Him Who is the "express Image of the FATHER." So unspeakably marvellous was the mystery of her conception, so great her destiny, that although not for her exaltation, but to guard the doctrine of the true Godhead of Him Who of her took His human nature, yet at the same time of necessity involving her own pre-eminent glory, the Catholic Council of primitive times scrupled not to entitle her, Mother of God.¹

Let us follow, then, the Church's guidance without fear ; and on this, one of the two days in the Christian year specially consecrated to her memory,² while we give to her SON the honour due to God alone, yet not fail to pay, with all the Communion of the Saints, the reverence and love due to her whom He, even now at the Right Hand of the FATHER, owns and loves as His Mother according to the flesh.

The Blessed Virgin is to be regarded, not as an instrument chosen indifferently among others who might equally have been selected among the daughters of Israel, but rather as one who had through the grace of GOD a special sanctity and moral fit-

¹ Following therefore the holy Fathers, we unanimously confess and teach that our LORD JESUS CHRIST was begotten before the world of the FATHER, according to His Godhead, and in these last days for us and for our salvation of Mary the Virgin τῆς Θεοτόκου (the bringer forth or Mother of God) according to His Manhood, one and the same CHRIST, SON, LORD, Only-Begotten, of two natures, without confusion, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, &c.—*Council of Chalcedon*, A.S. 451. *Definition of Faith.*

² The Sermon was preached on the Festival of the Annunciation

ness predisposing her for the grandeur of her destiny. Let us consider some of the features of her saintly character and peculiar preparation of heart, which are expressed in the words closing her mysterious interview with the Angel; "Behold the handmaid of the LORD; be it unto me according to thy word."

1. These words express S. Mary's faith and perfect response to the Will of God. Elizabeth referred to this distinctive grace in the blessing which she pronounced, when greeting her on her approach; "Blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD."¹ Contrast Mary's instant faith with those examples which in some degree resembled her's; such as Abraham's wife, who "laughed" at the Angel's assurance of her conception;² or that of Zacharias, who, in his nine months' dumbness, learnt better to appreciate the power of God.³ The mystery accomplished in Mary was greater than in the case either of Sarah or Elizabeth, both in her Virginal Conception, and in her Child. And yet how surpassingly is her co-operation with God's purposes distinguished in the contrast. That Mary should have long mused on the common hope of the daughters of Israel, of giving birth to the MESSIAH; that some dim vision of a Virgin Birth may have risen before her mind through Isaiah's prophecy,—would be no improbable suppositions; but to co-operate at once with so sudden, so unhesitating an act of faith in so amazing a dispensation, proves in her the existence of a power of apprehending the mysteries of God, of which we read no

¹ S. Luke i. 45.

² Gen. xviii. 12.

³ S. Luke i. 20.

similar instance. How GOD would have accomplished His merciful purpose, could Mary have failed to believe, we cannot guess; but here manifestly is one ground of reverence, and grateful love towards her, because of her instant assent of faith, and co-operation with GOD in the mysterious event on which the entire hope of fallen humanity hung suspended.

2. Again, the same words express a deep humility of character. It had been revealed to her that she was "highly favoured of GOD;" that "the HOLY GHOST would overshadow her;" that she would conceive through "the power of the Highest;" that the Offspring of this ineffable union would be the very SON of GOD." But Mary is still in her own sight only "the handmaid of the LORD." This same lowliness of mind is the key-note of her hymn. Its main thought is, how GOD hath regarded her in her low estate, and exalted one of low degree, and satisfied one who was empty of all good things. This grace was, we cannot doubt, one of the peculiar fitnesses which marked her out in the dispensation of GOD for her distinguished office; for we can herein readily discern a special bond of union between herself and her Divine Son. He in His Conception, emptying Himself of His Divine Glory, self-annihilated, took within her womb not merely the form of a creature, but of one in a state of subjection to the creatures, a servant of servants. What then more fitting than that she who co-operated in the mystery of such a Birth, should herself also be self-abased, emptied of every thought of vain glory.

3. Again, these words express a meek submis-

sion to the consequences of the awful destiny to which she was chosen. She could not indeed have foreseen the amount of trial involved in giving birth to the "Man of Sorrows." But experience must have taught her, that all true compliance with the will of GOD involves self-sacrifice and pain. The calls of grace which she had before received, must needs have searched her inner heart, and caused her to feel how nature suffers in its co-operation with the high demands of GOD. This more amazing call can hardly have failed to be accompanied with a secret consciousness of future trial, as its consequence, as the darkest shadow falls where the sun shines out the brightest. That the dispositions of her soul were strung in harmony with the law of patient endurance, is manifested in the quiet unmoved spirit with which she accepts all the indications of future sorrow which darken around her path. Simeon soon revealed to her the consequences of the assent which she had given; "Yea a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also;"¹ and she shrank not from this prophecy of approaching agony. Afterwards, as successive trials manifested more and more clearly her own share of sorrow in the sufferings of her Child, she accepted each sorrow with the same ready assent with which she first welcomed the salutation of the Angel. The slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem; the hurried flight into Egypt; the long banishment in the strange land among the heathen; the secret return home still in fear; the anguish of the three days' separation in Jerusalem, when her Child was lost in the crowd returning from the Feast; the

¹ S. Luke ii. 45.

going forth of her Son from her home into the world; the intense anxieties of the three years' ministry, preparing the way for the unspeakable, unknown anguish of the Passion; the night of the Agony; the hours beneath the Cross; the watching by the Tomb; the loneliness that followed, the widowed and childless age; the long waiting for death to reunite her to Him Who had grown around a mother's yearnings, the One Object of every thought, desire, care,—these were the interpretations of the prophecy of the aged Simeon, and the fulfilment of her own acceptance of the Eternal Will. Nor did she turn aside from any single step of that awful course, on which in her first act of faith she entered.

Let us consider the lessons which we may gather from the example of this ever-Blessed Saint. The peculiar value of her example consists mainly in exhibiting to us the dispositions of heart requisite to co-operate with the grace of God; for in her we see the noblest creation of grace co-operating with the most transcendent act of the Divine condescension. And the same dispositions which rendered Mary capable of so exalted a destiny, must characterise all in their measure, to whom God vouchsafes special gifts and calls of service; for whatever be the measure of grace, small or great, still the same principles of moral fitness must apply.

One lesson to be drawn from her example is the exceeding value of habitual meditation on the Divine mysteries. This exercise evidently characterized the Blessed Virgin. On first hearing the Angel's address, she "cast in her mind what manner of

salutation this should be.”¹ Again, it is said of her, “His mother kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her heart.”² Both these descriptions, the one of her thoughtful reception of the Angel, the other of her inward musing on his word, imply a habit of mind, and lead to the conclusion that such habitual cherishing of the visitations of the grace of GOD, had prepared her for a union of soul with Divine mysteries, moulding her will into harmony with the will of GOD, raising her powers of spiritual apprehension, and thus preparing her to receive within her, as in a Temple, the overshadowing of the HOLY GHOST.

One reason why many do not correspond with the grace of GOD is, because they do not realise the truth and greatness of eternal things. We daily move on the verge of eternity, ready to open before our eyes at any moment. We touch at every point the mysteries of the unseen world. How different would life become, if the consciousness of such a position were preserved as an habitual state! The very idea of the reality of sanctity is not by many admitted, because it is not believed to be a possible attainment. Perfect purity, constant self-sacrifice, calm endurance of evils, entire unselfishness, voluntary poverty, detachment from the world, and such like precepts, are treated as enthusiastic dreams. Mortification, fasting, prayer, have no real hold on the faith, because their efficacy against the powers of evil is not perceived. Men move in unrealities, and use words without meaning, and perform acts without heart, and accept dogmas with a cold acquiescence, and all the while float onward in the same course of

¹ S. Luke i. 29.

² S. Luke ii. 51.

sin and of self-indulgence, simply because their minds have no grasp, no possession, no substantial perception of the truths which they profess. They are to many as the mythical tales of history, or the fables of Eastern romance to the uneducated. From this cause we see laxity of life, the contented sinking under the infirmities of the flesh, and an abiding decay in lives professedly religious. Few have any substantial foundation for the spiritual life of their souls, or sustaining power for their acts of devotion. They are dependent only on chance circumstances, or the weight of personal example, or the sustaining presence of constant outward calls, or a mechanical routine of fixed rules. They have no stay in themselves. Such persons can have no stability, when the rains descend, and the floods arise, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house, which is built upon the sands.

How different is the condition of those in whom their regeneration has had a real and living development, whose eyes have been opened, who have beheld and embraced the invisible with as real and definite a hold, as though they saw and touched with the outward sense! They mix in the same pursuits, they enter as carefully into the details of the world; but they are drawn upwards more and more to live, and view all things in the inner depths of the Mind of God, ever musing on Its growing manifestations, and, as from the Mount of their Transfiguration, they descend to fulfil their earthly tasks, learning to fulfil them day by day with an ease, a sweetness, a calm, a superiority of aim, an unselfishness, a singleness of purpose, a radiance of quiet joy, a gentle reverence, which is

wholly inexplicable to the man of the world, or seem but the refinements of a high-bred courtesy. Is it that such persons have a natural temperament peculiar to themselves? Is it that they are enthusiasts? The explanation is not difficult. Whatever the difficulties of the attainment of such a state, they have learnt a lesson which was practised well in the chamber of the Annunciation. They have pondered the Divine mysteries, till they have become their only real life. The hollowness of the shell of this outer world has been seen through; and the sanctities of the Communion of the Saints, the beatitude of creatures perfectly united with God, have become the only substantial world in which they can find a rest for their feet, worn and jaded with their earthly travail. Their measures, their objects, have therefore become different in every detail of life; not because they have received the Shibboleth of an hereditary form of faith, or adopted a phrase caught from the fashion of a religious circle, but because they have seen the living Truth, out of which the laws of religion issue, as out of an ever-gushing Fountain, and are ever dwelling in their inmost daily thoughts at the Sources of all true power and love.

How can this true life be learnt against the constant pressure of the counteracting influences of the external visible world, except by an habitual gaze, a growing apprehension of the Invisible, a state of mind which S. Paul describes when he says, “Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD; . . . that I may know Him and the power of His Resurrection, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,

but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of CHRIST JESUS; and this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of GOD in CHRIST JESUS?"¹ It may be objected; "Is not this the habit of a purely contemplative life, and I am in the midst of the world?" But Mary, though ever Virgin, was a wife and a mother, one who dwelt among her own people, who had a house of her own, with its household cares, and earthly claims. It would seem to have been purposely ordained of GOD, that her example should have its instructive application to all relations of married life, equally as to the virgin state, in order to prove that the habitual contemplation of Divine mysteries may be the heritage alike of both conditions.

2. Again, another special lesson to be drawn from the study of the Blessed Virgin's life, is humility. It was the characteristic feature of her deportment during the scene of the Annunciation. It is a saying of S. Augustine, that however perfect other graces may be, they would be defective without humility, because it is the necessary disposition to receive the communications of GOD. And the reason which the Saint gives is, that in order to receive the gifts of GOD, the soul must be emptied of itself; when self is removed, GOD has, as it were, space wherein to unfold His Fulness. Humility is the renunciation of all self-glorying, all self-will, the prostration of all high thoughts, the

¹ Philip. iii. 8, 10, 12—14.

annihilation of self-esteem, the going forth out of self in the perpetual consciousness of the need of Divine aid. The special blessing of humility is, that it sets us free from the power of the old creation, which is founded upon pride, and gives full scope for the graces of the new creation, which is founded on the sacrifice of self in the Person of the Incarnate God. It is a law by which all communications of God are regulated; "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."¹ Pride is in direct contrariety to the whole spirit of the Gospel. It is not like any other single vice, opposed to some positive commandment. It is at variance with the entire revelation of God. It is an antagonistic state of mind, and so far as it extends within the soul, so far it excludes the possibility of conversion to God. Pride of one's own opinions, one's own successes, one's own appearance, one's own abilities, comparisons of one's self with others, the self-consciousness of some superior endowment of the soul, of the intellect, or of the imagination,—is in every degree a perpetual hindrance to grace. This fatal character extends to all the clinging remains of vanity. The depth and virulence of the evil lies in the fact, that it is a practical denial of the Incarnation; for the Incarnation is the perfect exhibition of the Divine Humility, and was intended to exhibit before the eyes of all the elect the most sacred example of this grace, in order to win them to its likeness. In His own Person, through all His created Life, God abased Himself to the lowest possible point of self-renunciation. His ever-renewed Presence in the blessed Sacrament is now a perpetuation after a more

¹ 1 S. Pet. v. 5.

mysterious form of the same Divine Humiliation. His yearning to enter into our very souls and bodies, and dwell within us, and make His abode with us, in the midst of our infirmities and sinfulness, is a yet further expression and effect of unspeakable lowliness and condescension. Therefore it is that S. Paul teaches the necessity of humility by showing its close connection with the acts of the Incarnation, as being correlative laws of the same order of grace. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in CHRIST JESUS, Who, being in the form of GOD, thought it not robbery to be equal with GOD, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."¹ To be conformed to Him Who is thus characterized by an unspeakable humility in all His manifestations in the Flesh, implies of necessity an ever growing disposition of increasing lowliness. As this grace was a necessary preparation of S. Mary for her high vocation, even so must it ever be an essential characteristic of every one who has hope of eternal life in CHRIST.

3. A further lesson which we may here learn, is a willing consent to suffer in compliance with the will of GOD. Our natural disposition is to shrink from suffering. The stream of natural desires and impulses sets against it. This is the secret cause of sloth, the strength of self-indulgence and sensuality. To follow the seductions of sense, and

¹ Phil. ii. 5—8.

shrink from the exertion necessary to bear the pain of resistance, is the natural bent of all our minds. The Incarnation of GOD, and so every degree of union with His Life, proceeds on a completely opposite law. The law which since the fall regulated the union of GOD with our nature, is a law of suffering. It involved throughout all His earthly course the mortification of the flesh. It is a necessity of our probation, which even our LORD willed to bear, that He might in all things be "made like unto His brethren."¹ "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."² And the same law regulates the purification and perfecting of His elect. "Forasmuch then as CHRIST hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of GOD."³

Suffering assumes various forms, as GOD appoints to every man. It may be the life-long discipline, which unceasingly restrains the energies of evil by means of a willingly accepted rule, habitually followed through infinite nameless details of self-sacrifice and patient compliance. Or it may be the sharp pang of some sore affliction coming unexpectedly, breaking into the ordinary tenour of the life, and changing the whole after course, in which the soul learns the supernatural power sustaining a patient trust in GOD. It may be the burden of years of bereavement, or weary sickness, or the keenness of bodily pain, or repeated disappointments, or long waiting for the fulfilment of cherished desires, or

¹ Heb. ii. 17.² Heb. v. 8.³ 1 S. Pet. iv. 1, 2.

the mere necessity of unnoticed duties pressing day after day. Some form of outward or inward trial there must needs be, through which the gradual transformation of the fallen is being worked out through their union with the SON of GOD. It is no unmeaning coincidence, that the Festival of the Annunciation falls within a few days of Holy Week. The deep shadows of the Cross on Calvary are cast back, and lie in the chamber of the Holy Conception. Every step in the amazing revelation then opening on the world, tended towards the Crucifixion. The very purity of that mystical bridal Chamber arose out of the refining fire of an habitual submission to the will of GOD. The very act of the Holy Conception was the offering of soul and body as a perfect Sacrifice. It was the fulness of an unspeakable glory to her who bore Him in the womb, but it was purchased at the cost of a whole life of trial. As the suffering Mother stood beneath the Cross, she learned the fulness of her awful destiny ; but all the preceding years had been a constant teaching, that high callings of grace involve an unusual discipline of the inward life.

It is the same with every one of CHRIST's elect in their measure, as with His Blessed Mother. It is the same in the case of every vow of self-dedication, with every fresh binding of the soul to GOD. It involves trial. Unexpected temptations, new calls for effort, woundings, losses, struggles, faintings of heart, unfold themselves by degrees, though only as we are enabled to bear them. Thus by every one is felt a measure of the weight of Deity, as the Divine Will reveals Its secret purpose for one's individual life, winning the heart to make

ever fresh sacrifices in union with the eternal laws of Life and Love, known only when we cast ourselves upon them as our one aim, and seek to fulfil all that is demanded of us.

We learn the full results of a perfect self-sacrifice while gazing on the Crown of Thorns, on the fevered Lips, on the Bleeding of the Five Sacred Wounds, on the Soul forsaken of God. We cannot look to these as the instruments and pledges of sin overcome, and of our nature perfected and reconciled to God, unless we can accept them as tokens of a destiny in which we must expect to bear our portion. We must ourselves expect to bear the Cross, as well as trust in it. We cannot unite ourselves with the life of the Incarnation, unless we too can bear the touch of pain, through which its deep mystery was accomplished. Two of the Apostles desired to sit, the one on the Right Hand, the other on the Left Hand, in His kingdom. The request was not refused; but it was coupled with the question, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"¹

And yet we need not fear, but that He Who tempers the east wind to the shorn lamb, Who "knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust,"² Who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"³ and measures every burden that falls upon us, will not suffer us to be overwhelmed, if we put our whole trust in Him; will either lighten or even remove our trial, though we have deserved its full weight, Himself "bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows," and sparing us, while by "His stripes we are healed;" Himself alone being bound, while we are let go free; for not only

¹ S. Mark x. 38.

² Ps. ciii. 14.

³ Heb. iv. 15.

“on Him has been laid the iniquity of us all,” but also
“the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.”¹

The destiny in which S. Mary abides with God can have no equal among the saints, even as the grace with which she responded to her high and marvellous calling gives to her a singular pre-eminence. Yet our LORD has taught us that through union of will with His Will, there may be a closeness of relationship to Him, bearing a mysterious resemblance to the ties which bind Him to her of whom He took His life in the flesh. “And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, Behold My mother, and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of My FATHER Which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.”² Nor, indeed, can imagination conceive a closeness of union and relation greater than that which Holy Scripture describes under various forms of expression, as applicable to all His true elect. To “dwell in Him, and He in us;” to be “one with Him, and He with us;” to “live by Him, as He liveth by the FATHER;”³ to be of “the same mind” with Him;⁴ to be “members of His Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones;”⁵ to “sit with Him on His Throne, even as He is set down with His FATHER in His Throne,”⁶—these are descriptions, however symbolic their outward expression may be, of a closeness of union of which earthly ties form no adequate parallel.

Every call that we receive is an annunciation, as certain as though it came through an angel’s lips, that He wills to perfect this blessed union with

¹ Isa. liii. 4, 5, 6. ² S. Matt. xii. 49, 50. ³ S. John vi. 56, 57.

⁴ Phil. ii. 5.

⁵ Ephes. v. 30.

⁶ Rev. iii. 21.

Himself, if we co-operate with His grace in its demands of ever advancing faithfulness in our several vocations. Only believe, "and all things are possible to him that believeth."¹ Live in such habitual intimacy with the Unseen, musing on the mysteries of the faith, and in the consciousness of the Presence of GOD growing into an ever-increasing knowledge of His mind, that no intimation of His blessed will may come as altogether a strange or unwelcome message. Strive to live in a higher region of contemplation, while ever more and more perfectly fulfilling the least demands of our earthly state, which are equally of GOD, equally our LORD's chosen lot, and equally the materials of a saintly discipline. Persevere in fulfilling with a ready will the merciful callings of GOD, as the ordained order of life, and the chosen means of perfection, to every one in his own separate sphere, as "the SPIRIT divideth to every man severally as He will."² There can be no limit to the ultimate blessedness of one who thus accepts and fulfils the will of GOD in the grace of the kingdom of the Incarnation; for GOD is the Infinite, the Eternal, and the capacities of redeemed humanity know no bound short of His own perfect Image.

It will be enough for each one of His own Elect, enough for present consolation in the midst of all appointed trials, enough for eternal greatness and bliss, whatever the appointed lot of each may be, if only it be given to co-operate with GOD with the readiness which breathes in the response, "Behold the handmaid of the LORD;" and to live in all the changes of life with the one thought, "Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

¹ S. Mark ix. 23.

² 1 Cor. xii. 11.

SERMON XXI.

THE ONE SPIRIT IN THE ONE BODY.

2 KINGS II. 15.

“THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH DOTHTH REST ON ELISHA.”

THE last interview between Elijah and Elisha is one of the most touching narratives of the Old Testament. The journey together to the banks of the Jordan; Elijah's pressing entreaty three times repeated, that Elisha would not continue to follow him, “Tarry, I pray thee, here,” and Elisha's reply as often renewed, “As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee;” the approaching separation so painful to Elisha, that he could not bear to hear it spoken of; “yea, I know it, I know it, hold ye your peace;” then, when the waters of the Jordan had parted asunder, and they two had gone together into the wilderness, Elijah's promise, “Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee,” and Elisha's response, revealing for the first time the deep longing cherished in his heart, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me;” and then “the chariot of fire and the horses of fire,” and the parting asunder, and the last look, and Elisha left alone to go back

to fulfil the weary toil of many years of a prophet's life, amidst a gainsaying and disobedient people,—are all incidents of the profoundest, and most moving interest.

It was a momentous crisis of fear, and utmost loneliness. But strength came to the heart of the bereaved man, of which before he knew not. The “hard thing” was granted. The mantle of prophecy and supernatural power had fallen from above, and “the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha.”

In this passing of the spirit from one person to rest on another, the succession of the self-same grace binding them together in one communion of spiritual gifts, we see a type of the marvellous mystery of Divine love which is now fulfilled in us in a still higher form of life,—the communication of the Spirit of the Son of Man from Himself to all them that follow Him. The Spirit of CHRIST rests now on His Body, the Church; rests on each one of His faithful disciples. The same Spirit that is in Him, abides in them, binding them and Him together in one communion of life.

There is a tendency to separate the dispensation of the Son of Man from the dispensation of the Spirit, as though they were not co-existent, and in perfect harmony with each other. Two errors are found among us on this point. One is to dwell so entirely on CHRIST, that the HOLY SPIRIT is comparatively forgotten; the other, the direct contrary, to regard CHRIST and His Example as altogether a past condition of life, and the work of the Spirit as an advanced state which has superseded it. Both these errors arise from one cause, from a mistaken interpretation of the words in which our LORD and

the Blessed Spirit mutually speak the One of the Other.

Our LORD revealed the coming of the Spirit, as a Substitute for Himself; "I will pray the FATHER, and He shall give you another Comforter." He magnified the Spirit as insuring a more lasting aid than His own; "He shall abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth." He declared that a greater gift of knowledge would be the result of the Spirit's Presence; "He shall teach you all things;"² and also greater miraculous powers; "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do, shall he do likewise, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the FATHER."³ Our LORD thus described the effects of the HOLY SPIRIT'S Presence, apparently lowering Himself by the contrast.

On the other hand, in the Epistles, where no longer CHRIST Himself, but the HOLY SPIRIT speaks, the very reverse takes place. There the Spirit speaks of CHRIST, as the great End of His own coming, and Himself only as the Minister of CHRIST. "I travail in pain," thus He inspires the Apostle to speak under the dispensation of the Spirit, "till CHRIST be formed in you."⁴ Again, "ye are CHRIST'S, and CHRIST is GOD'S."⁵ "Ye have the mind of CHRIST,"⁶ is the fulfilment of the desire of the Blessed Spirit. And in accordance with these expressions is the Apostle's exhortation; "He that glorieth, let him glory," not in the Spirit, but "in the LORD."⁷ The whole dispensation of the Spirit is "to preach CHRIST crucified,"⁸ as the one truth

¹ S. John xiv. 16.

³ S. John xiv. 12.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 23.

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 31.

² S. John xiv. 26.

⁴ Gal. iv. 19.

⁶ 1 Cor. ii. 16.

⁸ 1 Cor. i. 23.

embracing all other truths. CHRIST everywhere throughout the Epistles is set forth, as the “power of GOD and the wisdom of GOD.”¹

The explanation of these apparently conflicting representations is to be found in the humility which marks all the manifestations of the Two Divine Persons in their union with our nature. Our LORD exalts the Spirit, and the Spirit exalts our LORD. Each Blessed Person would, as it were, conceal Himself, and be as though He were not, exalting the Other, as though He alone were. The mysterious rivalry, if such an application of the term be permitted, is the profoundest and most moving instance of the grace of humility to be impressed for ever on the creature in his efforts to be restored to the likeness of GOD,—a lesson which GOD in His Own Nature could not teach, but taught by Him in every act alike of the Incarnation of the Eternal SON, and of the Indwelling in us of the HOLY GHOST. The ineffably gracious condescension of the Two ever-blessed Persons in the humility of self-concealment, is the explanation of the apparent contradiction.

The passing of the spirit from Elijah to Elisha, though itself a great reality, for it involved the whole life and power of a Prophet,—was yet but a type of a still profounder mystery. There is a manifest difference between the language of the Old Testament and the New, when describing the Presence of the Spirit in GOD’s elect. In the New Testament only we read of the Spirit “*dwelling*,” “*abiding*” in man, as in a home; of man becoming “an *habitation* of GOD through the Spirit;”² of his being “a *temple* of the HOLY GHOST.”³ Such words occur

¹ 1 Cor. i. 24.

² Eph. ii. 22.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 19.

not in the Old Testament, and they imply an incorporation of the Blessed Spirit in our nature, a personal mode of Presence, not vouchsafed before. In the New Testament consequently for the first time we read of a spiritual life, as a settled state of man; of man become a "spiritual" creature; of spiritual-mindedness, as a permanent character; of the power of mortifying the body through the Spirit; of new forms of grace developed as the fruits of the Spirit; of a spiritual discernment, "an unction of the Holy One,"¹ teaching man of Itself; of being "changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the LORD;"² of an inward witness of "the Spirit with our spirit;"³ as though we were already out of the body, translated into God. These are new forms of speech limited to the New Testament. They found no place in the former Covenant. And they express a vital change through a new Presence of the Blessed Spirit in the world of man's nature.

Two causes for such a change have been revealed to us. Our LORD's perfected sacrifice pleaded in the heavens, has obtained for man a fuller outpouring of the "unspeakable gift."⁴ And secondly, the indwelling of the Spirit in the Humanity of CHRIST fitted Him for a new form of indwelling in our redeemed nature, of which we partake. He abided in the Manhood of the SON, as He never before abided in man, and the same Spirit in the same indwelling passes from our LORD to His servants, even as the spirit of Elijah passed to Elisha.

There are two modes of the Presence of the Blessed Spirit.

¹ 1 S. John ii. 20.

³ Rom. viii. 16.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18.

⁴ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

1. He abides in the Body of the Church. He is the Soul of the entire organised framework of the mystical Body of CHRIST. "There is one Body, and one Spirit."¹ Individual souls are held in communion one with another, by the pervading presence of the One Spirit. "By One Spirit we are all baptized into One Body; and have been all made to drink into One Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many."² "Now ye," the collective multitude of the Elect, "are the body of CHRIST, and members in particular."³ It is through this perpetually abiding Presence that any manifestation of miraculous energy or supernatural grace at any moment would be possible, moving either in the whole Body, or in any one of its members. It would be merely the expression of a power which is always present in the fulness of its life. This same Presence is the groundwork of the Communion of the Saints. The term Communion means a life so common to all that it makes all one. The life is one, though endlessly diversified. There were two robes which our LORD wore. One was capable of division, and was distributed to different individuals. "They parted My garments among them."⁴ This symbolizes the varied forms of individual character in one or another of the Body of CHRIST. The other robe was seamless, indivisible. "For My vesture they did cast lots."⁵ This symbolizes the inner life, which is the same, indivisible in all. Inwardly there is a true and perfect unity; outwardly there is an endless diversity. Our individuality varies infinitely; but underlying it, in the

¹ Eph. iv. 4.² 1 Cor. xii. 13, 14.³ 1 Cor. xii. 27.⁴ Ps. xxii. 18.⁵ Ps. xxii. 18.

inner being of each, lives the One seamless Spirit alike indwelling in all.

On the Presence of this all-pervading Spirit, indwelling in the whole Body, binding together all its individual members, rests the profoundest claim to love, and mutual care between man and man; for what is the love even of nearest relatives, of closest friends, but a mere natural impulse, if this inner unity exist not? As one expression of this inner unity, arises the cry of common intercession, linking together, in the consciousness of mutual aid and mutual necessities, the entire body of the faithful in both worlds. If the life of prayer is the Spirit Himself within each of the elect, "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered,"¹ is it conceivable but that this should be a necessary condition of life within the whole body, as breathing indicates life in our physical frame? Can the same Spirit pervade the whole body, and yet the voice of the Spirit be so stayed in any one portion, that It should cease to pray for every other portion of the same Body? May it not even be, that through "the joints and bands" of a true spiritual unity, binding together the several members of the one Body of CHRIST, there may be communications of the One Spirit secretly passing from one member of His Body to the other members; that as Elijah's spirit passed from him to rest on Elisha, so when we follow some sainted disciple of CHRIST, we may be not merely copying a holy example, but also sharing some measure of the Spirit Which is in him,—a mysterious communion of life ordained in order to knit together the true elect more

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

closely in one by such mutual fellowship in the common gift of a supernatural union in God ?

II. Again, as the indwelling Spirit is thus the soul of the entire Communion of the Saints, so also He dwells in every individual member of CHRIST, in each one as in the whole Body. He is to each separate person in our LORD's mystical Body, what He is to the whole Body. And the great truth here to note is, that the very same Spirit rests on each one of us, that rested on CHRIST Himself; and if the selfsame Spirit, then the same manner of life, however different in its fulness.

On this account it is that after the shedding forth of the HOLY SPIRIT we read of the same marks of character, the same sentiments and acts, immeasurably inferior indeed in perfectness, yet the same in kind, in those who follow CHRIST, as before in CHRIST Himself. The brief records of the Acts of the Apostles mark these effects. Consider S. Stephen in his last hours. His last prayer, "LORD, lay not this sin to their charge,"¹ is the very copy of our LORD's Prayer in His last hour, "FATHER, forgive them; for they know not what they do."² Again, S. Stephen's last act of commending himself to GOD, "LORD JESUS, receive my spirit,"³ is a renewal of our LORD's last words on the Cross, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."⁴ A similar love, and a similar self-devotion, however different in degrees of perfectness, are manifest alike in both, because the same Spirit was in both. Compare again S. Paul's description of himself,—“ I have

¹ Acts vii. 60.

³ Acts vii. 59.

² S. Luke xxiii. 34.

⁴ S. Luke xxiii. 46.

learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need,"¹—with our Blessed LORD's expression of His own mind; "I come to do Thy will, O My God; I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is within My heart."² Again, trace the likeness of the many, who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods,"³ counting it "joy to suffer for CHRIST's sake," to its original pattern in the poverty of CHRIST; or of the many resolved to preserve a single state in order to care "without distraction" "for the things of the LORD, how they may please the LORD,"⁴ to the example of His virgin life unfettered by the world. Or observe the constant instances of willing, glad humiliation which the Holy Scripture records, so that men of like passions with ourselves, could endure without complaining to be accounted as "the offscouring of all things,"⁵—faint and imperfect, but real reproductions of the "mind which was also in CHRIST JESUS, Who, being in the form of God," yet "made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross."⁶

There could not but be these resemblances, these samenesses of mind and of act, if the same Spirit passed from the one to the other. There must needs be this likeness, as surely as Elisha renewed the work of Elijah in Israel, because the same spirit

¹ Phil. iv. 12.² Heb. x. 7.³ Heb. x. 34.⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 32.⁵ 1 Cor. iv. 13.⁶ Phil. ii. 8.

rested on him. Even so each one who is indeed CHRIST's, by a natural order of cause and effect, exhibits the same features of life, and experiences the same movements of soul, one with his Ever-Blessed Master. The Spirit within us is perpetually yearning to produce in each one of His members His likeness, and His Presence in us is fulfilled only as It produces this effect. The likeness of CHRIST in us will not indeed assume the same forms in each, nor be expressed in the same vocations; for "the Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will;"¹ but yet it may be a true and blessed oneness with our LORD, complete in itself, complete according to the idea of GOD for us, however partial and imperfect as compared with CHRIST. It is this which the Apostle represents as the true end of the life of grace in every man, when he explains the purpose of his apostolic ministry to be, "CHRIST in you, the hope of glory."²

Two points of detail in the practical life fall naturally within this line of thought.

I. There is a difficulty universally felt in sustaining recollection in prayer. It is the grief of the most loving hearts. It mars in every one, more or less, the blessedness of conscious communion with GOD. In many it hinders the powers of grace to a lamentable extent. Efforts to remedy this imperfection seem often to be made in vain, though the like efforts may have overcome other faults. Anxiety as to this defect seems at times even to provoke and increase the tendency. Now the truth of the perfect community of life in the One Body

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 11.

² Col. i. 27.

of CHRIST, suggests one aid for this pervading weakness. We are, when praying through the aid of the Spirit of CHRIST, united with the prayers of all who partake of the same Spirit. He is in each one the Source of the power of prayer. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."¹ "The Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."² He is the One Spirit of prayer, pleading with God in each one of His Elect equally as in the whole Body. Our individual prayer is but one accent, one note of the vast sound of many like voices breathed out of the same centre of living desire, one wave of the endless swell of hearts rising in prayer throughout both worlds, alike of the living and of the dead.

Do you, then, feel unable to maintain your thoughts fixed in prayer? Call up to your remembrance the great truth, that you are in connexion with this one vast Body. Quicken within you the assurance that you are linked together with its many members; that your prayers are borne on with the infinite streams ever flowing upwards to God. Stay yourself on the idea of the vast multitudes supporting you, as one with weak and faltering voice in a choir, stays his own feebleness and wavering on the volume of sound of the whole choir with which he is united. Thus feel around you one continuous stream of prayer, spreading from the many sanctuaries and secret chambers on earth together with the worship of the Saints in heaven upward to the Throne of God, in which the feeble is supported by the stronger, the less gifted by the more gifted. Unite your intention with theirs.

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

² Ibid.

Bear in heart, as an act of faith, that you are one of them, though the least. Lean on the vast communion of prayers, as a stay for your own; even as the whole Body, and yourself in the Body, leans on the intercession of your LORD, as the One only stay and meritorious ground of acceptance, in Whom either the strong or the weak can find access to the Throne of Grace.

It is not that any one may take this comfort, if indulging, or making light of distractions, or while yielding to spiritual feebleness; but only when such defects are a burden and an affliction. But surely as our LORD'S perpetual intercession is the life of the prayers of the whole Communion of His Body the Church, and of each separate spirit pleading its wants before God, so "the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much," not for himself alone, but for others; and every one who prays in dependence on the power of the One Intercessor, longing to be perfected in the mind and utterance of the SPIRIT, partakes of the efficacy of the one universal prayer, with its infinite individual petitions; for an interest and fellowship in the prayers of the whole Church of the redeemed, living or dead, is part of the Communion of Saints. We may be unable even to speak, or think a thought of prayer; but if we have the will, the trust, the longing, in that will, in that trust, in that longing, though in utmost weakness, we many unite ourselves with the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, who, in union with their and our LORD, rest not day or night before the Throne. We are one with them in their adoration, in their petitions.

¹ S. James v. 17.

We are one with them in the SPIRIT through Whom they pray. We are one with them by faith in Him through Whom alone we with them and they with us are accepted.

2. To cherish brightness in the inward life is a duty that results from the union of the elect soul with the Blessed SPIRIT. There is a union between the two closer than any of which we can form a conception. Closer than the union of flesh with flesh, is that of spirit with Spirit; an inner wedded closeness of mind with mind, of thought with thought; an union, not as of two beings without each other, combined together, but of one being within another's being, as of one possessed. Now the Spirit of God dwells in a radiance and a glory, bright beyond all thought. It is His everlasting dwelling-place; the atmosphere ever surrounding His Presence. It is remarkable with what earnestness and frequency S. Paul enjoins a spirit of rejoicing, as an essential part of a spiritual life; and his words prove that this injunction is intimately connected with the indwelling of the Blessed SPIRIT. He represents "joy" as one of the fruits of the SPIRIT, following next in order to "love."¹ Again, the Spirit of glory is spoken of as synonymous with the Spirit of God,—“the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you,”²—and glory is the excess of joyous light. The necessity of this outflowing of the Spirit is most strongly pressed upon us; “Rejoice always, and again I say, rejoice.”³

Moreover as a bright joy is the proper result of

¹ Gal. v. 22.

² 1 S. Pet. iv. 14.

³ Phil. iv. 4.

the Presence of the SPIRIT, so is it a direct aid to the attainment of virtue. There is an instructive lesson in the incident recorded of Elisha, that once he needed a minstrel with his instrument of music to allay his perturbed soul, before "the Hand of the LORD" could come upon him, and his lips utter the voice of prophecy.¹ It teaches the momentous truth, that an unclouded peace, a harmony of thought in communion with God, which is the secret of spiritual joy, is the true condition for receiving His inward illuminations. It is commonly observed that cheerfulness of animal spirits is an aid to natural virtue, the source or nourishment of amiable dispositions, enabling a man to rise above difficulties and trials with a ready ease. Similar results are experienced in the spiritual life. Gloom and despondency are direct avenues to temptation, disposing the soul to doubt or fear, and enfeebling its powers of resistance against the suggestions of evil. Many temptations at once pass away, when joy of heart is rekindled. Burdens cease to be felt, hindrances disappear, and the power of effort revives, from the mere recovery of happier thoughts.

Moreover, it is not to be supposed that brightness is inconsistent with sorrow, or even with deep remorse of conscience. It is compatible with all states of spiritual life, however feeble, however burdened. Wherever the Spirit of God dwells, there must needs be an inward shining of the holy light, though hidden from the outward eye, hidden it may be even from the consciousness of the soul itself, troubled and darkened by the passing cloud. A secret

¹ 2 Kings iii. 15.

radiance may be within the depth of the spirit, to shine out again when the storm is overpast. Only sin, or unfaithfulness to the voice of conscience, or slothful decline from grace, of necessity forfeits this blessed witness of the Presence of the Eternal SPIRIT. It may be dimmed or overcast by the will of GOD, as a chastisement, or discipline, teaching its own needful lessons of humility and trust and patient endurance. But we should ever pray for the continuance or renewal of joy. Rejoicing is a grace to be earnestly cherished, as well as a promised blessing; a duty to be steadily fulfilled, as well as a part of our blessed inheritance. We are exhorted to "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."¹

We have not far to seek. We have but to follow the movements of a power already stirring within us. The Presence of the Blessed SPIRIT within the redeemed soul prevents all its efforts, anticipates every inclination towards the fulfilment of our calling in CHRIST, even as He perfects the work which He has begun. The mystery of preventing grace is our great condemnation, if we fall, or fail to persevere; but it is also our unceasing assurance of strength and Divine love. Let it be a continual aim to stir up this gift that is in us. Yield to every better thought. Follow every suggestion of good, as opportunity opens. Resolve to choose in all questions of choice the higher line of action. Cherish the desire for continual advancement in the knowledge and service of GOD. Reverence the mysterious Presence veiled within the

¹ Heb. iii. 6.

consciousness of the soul. Preserve thyself pure from the contaminations of the flesh and the world. Let not evil thoughts, or impulses of selfishness, remain to acquire power over thy heart. Trust evermore in the sustaining power of the grace of God. Be simple, true, single-hearted, instant in prayer, studious in pondering the Word of God, consistent in the duties of thy station, patient, unwearied, lowly, and of a calm and steadfast mind. The promises of the Covenant of God cannot fail, if only we have faith to receive its fulness of joy. The same Voice which spake of old to the faint of heart, is still heard across the chasm of ages with the same fulness of assuring love; "Yet now hear, Jacob, My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the LORD, That made thee, and formed thee from the womb, Which will help thee: Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour out My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thy offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the watercourses. One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel. Thus saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the LORD of Hosts; I am the First and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God."¹

¹ Isa. xliv. 1—6.

SERMON XXII.

THE LIGHT OF THE HEART.

2 COR. IV. 6.

“FOR GOD WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS, HATH SHINED IN OUR HEARTS, TO GIVE THE LIGHT OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST.”

THE first and simplest truth involved in the text, is the universality of the grace of GOD in CHRIST, at least its capability of application to all mankind. This is implied in the unlimited range of influence attributed to the Divine Light, as shining not on a chosen few, as e.g., on the Apostles themselves, but on all whom S. Paul addressed uniting all his brethren with himself in a community of participation of the same grace, the same light shining on “*our hearts* ;” and also in the imagery employed, the light of the day being an universal gift, shed without limit for the common benefit of all creatures. Thus the light of CHRIST hath shined without respect of persons upon our common humanity. There is no distinction made between man and man, as though GOD was partial in His dealings in His purpose of redemption.

There was a time when this equality was not, when God was shining upon one only race of mankind. The great principle of a common humanity, having the same relationship to the Invisible and Eternal FATHER, had been suspended, in order that the consequences of the Fall might be the more deeply impressed on the consciousness of the fallen ; that the ruined elements of humanity alienated from God, stripped of its original righteousness, might be gradually prepared, as they were able to bear it, for a restoration of the full radiance of the Eternal Light. During this interval there was a partial shining of the light of God upon the one race of Israel alone, and the rays which were diffused beyond their sphere passed to their fellow-men only through them by indirect revelations. Israel had a knowledge of God, but the rest were blinded. The rest of the nations knew Him, if at all, only as it were afar off. They stood in relation to the favoured race, as the “dogs,” to whom it was “not meet to cast the children’s bread.”¹ Our LORD recognized this distinction as a reality Divinely permitted ; for these were the “times of ignorance,” at which “God winked.”²

But this was a temporary economy, to last only until “the fulness of time had come,”³ when the progressive order of the dispensations of God had run out their appointed course, and their one common end in the manifestation of CHRIST was fulfilled. The distinction of necessity ceased when God became Incarnate ; for the Incarnation was the entering of God, not into a man, nor into one race of men, but into our common humanity, into our

¹ S. Matt. xv. 26.

² Acts xvii. 30.

³ Gal. iv. 4.

nature. S. John says, "That was the true Light, Which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."¹ Distinctions of race, of class, of sex, from thenceforward ceased to have any effect in shutting out the light which is the true life of men. In the central life in which man lives and moves before God, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in CHRIST JESUS."²

2. Moreover the text touches upon the momentous difference, permitted between the elect of the past and those of the present dispensation of God; the marked distinction in the relation in which Israel stood towards Him, and that which we occupy. The difference is manifest, if we compare the Old and the New Testament, in reference to the manifestation of Divine light, shining in the one or the other. The cry that rose up to God during the Old Testament period was expressed in the longings which pervade the Psalms: "LORD, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us."³ "Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole."⁴ The Psalmist expresses the prolonged cry of the faithful of the many generations that preceded the coming of our LORD. There was indeed among the chosen people a knowledge of God, distinguishing them above the nations of the earth; and there were special visions and illuminations vouchsafed to the more illustrious of the Saints of Israel, anticipating the coming revelation. But even Moses felt the one deep longing of those early

¹ S. John i. 9.

² Gal. iii. 28.

³ Ps. iv. 6.

⁴ Ps. lxxx. 3.

ages ; “ I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.”¹ And even to him but a passing glimpse of “ all the goodness ” of GOD could as yet be revealed. Nay, even in the earlier stage of the Incarnation, when the LORD was first visibly manifested, there was a dimness of sight shared even by the Apostles while looking upon Him face to face ; as e. g., when S. Philip asked of Him, “ Show us the FATHER, and it sufficeth us ; ” “ And JESUS said unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip ? He that hath seen Me, hath seen the FATHER, and how sayest thou then, Show us the FATHER ? ”² S. Philip’s prayer was still the old unsatisfied cry of the human heart, which had been thrilling all through the Patriarchal and Mo-saic Covenant. Only slowly did S. Philip comprehend what was then before his eyes, though there were others by his side of quicker sight ; and he at last apprehended what S. John was then feeding upon with ever-increasing powers of Divine illumination. “ And *we*,” not S. John alone, “ beheld His glory, the glory of the only-Begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and truth.”³

The illuminated consciousness of this supernatural

¹ Exodus xxxiii. 18. Some expressions in the Psalms may seem to be at variance with the assertion in the text, as e.g., “ The LORD is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear ? ” Ps. xxvii. 1. But a comparison of these words with the closing words of the Psalm shows that only an incipient manifestation, leaving yet a craving for its fulness, which till after the Incarnation could not be vouchsafed, was intended. “ I should utterly have fainted, but that I *believe* verily to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. O tarry thou the LORD’s leisure.” It was still only an object of faith and patient waiting.

² S. John xiv. 8, 9.

³ S. John i. 14.

glory extended itself after the Ascension through the outpouring of the HOLY GHOST; and its shining within the heart of man, so long withheld, became at length the inheritance of all that believe. S. Paul marks strongly the distinction between the Old and New Testament periods. Speaking of the Old Testament, he says; "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." And then describing the advanced life of the New Covenant, he immediately adds; "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."¹ Again, contrasting the two Testaments, after saying, "Even unto this day when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts," he adds, "But we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same Image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD."² The text corresponds with these passages, but it adds to them, tracing the blessedness of increased spiritual sight to its primal Source in God. "For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of JESUS CHRIST."³

The consequences of this change are manifest in the different tone of mind which characterises all the Apostolic writings. In their Epistles there is expressed no such cry as that which continually rose of old out of the heart of Israel. On the contrary the most restful spirit, though in the midst of sorest trials, marks the language of the Apostles; and their ground of rest lies in the inherent con-

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.² 2 Cor. iii. 15—18.³ 2 Cor. iv. 6.

sciousness of GOD. What repose of heart breathes throughout the opening of S. John's Epistle; "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life, (for the life was manifested, and we have seen It, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life which was with the FATHER, and was manifested unto us,) That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the FATHER, and with His SON JESUS CHRIST."¹ It is the repose of one who beholds an Object which has filled and satisfied his longings, conscious of apprehending a divine mystery, and to whom all outward things had become absorbed in the transcendent vision which possessed him.

3. The light shining in our hearts is not merely the manifestation of a truth, or the possession of an idea. We do not conceive of GOD, as of an Idea, or abstract Essence. This is manifest in the Old and New Testaments alike. Although the degrees of the Divine manifestation in the two Covenants differ widely, yet the principle in both is the same. Nowhere is GOD revealed as a mere Power, or an Intellect, or an Essence; but everywhere as a Person, as Power or Love embodied; not as mere life, but as a Being Who lives; Who is of a nature which, however unapproachable by us, has yet links of connection with our own; though not the same, yet corresponding attributes and impulses; a Being Who loves and can be loved, Who desires

¹ 1 S. John i. 1, 2, 3.

and asks for our love ; Who experiences some mysterious regret at the loss of His creatures, some mysterious sense of joy in His creatures' happiness. While the Old Testament Saints had an overwhelming consciousness of the awful Majesty of GOD, trembling before Him because they could not "see Him and live," yet their minds were keenly alive to the depth of His tenderness, and His sympathy. They lived in the thought of this Almighty Presence of Love watching beside their life, guarding, forming and overruling it with unceasing care ; and from this belief grew that passionate attachment, that fainting of desire, that panting of heart, which is expressed in such vivid representations in the Psalms. "Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O GOD. My soul is athirst for GOD ; yea even for the living GOD. When shall I come to appear before the Presence of GOD ?"¹ "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living GOD."² This fervid warmth, this devotion of love, which characterises the poetry, the prayers, the whole mind of the Saints of Israel, could not lose in the advanced Revelation of which Israel was merely the type. Rather there was added to the mind of the former Covenant, a sense of nearness, and closeness of communion, altogether unknown before ; a consciousness growing out of the union of the Divine and the human natures ; of the human heart joined with the Heart of GOD, making the love of the perfect man flow, as a new element of feeling, through all the relations which exist between GOD and the elect members of CHRIST.

¹ Ps. xlii. 1, 2.² Ps. lxxxiv. 2.

Our nature craves for the embodiment of its ideas. We cannot rest till they have assumed palpable forms. The vision of beauty must be embodied by the Poet in his verse, by the Architect in his building, by the Painter in his colours. We have, indeed, no idea of beauty, or of love, till it has assumed a palpable form. We are not touched even by suffering, as a mere abstract conception. It must be associated with some feeling sensitive nature, and then it moves our sensibilities. The same law prevails in our relations to the Divine. Our heart is penetrated, closes around and embraces God, and finds rest and satisfaction to its longings in Him, in proportion as He assumes before the eye of our soul a living, feeling, substantial Form, to Which our being can respond.

That this is the manifestation into which we have entered, is evident from the words of the text, where it is said that it is “the light of the glory of God in the *Face* of JESUS CHRIST,” which has “shined in our hearts.” What had before been embodied only in the unimaginable and uncreated Substance of the ineffable Godhead, has assumed features and expression in the created Countenance of Him Who is God and Man undividedly in one unchanging Personality. Nor can we conceive a more moving thought than that this Divine and human Person, True Man as He is True God, indissolubly One, has removed Himself to the innermost Heaven; His identity unaffected by His change of place, or condition; and there to be hereafter manifested for ever to the eyes of redeemed man, the express Image of the FATHER, “the Fulness of the Godhead bodily,”¹ not as now by the spiritual illuminations of faith

¹ Col. ii. 9.

only, but seen and touched by the bodily sense marvellously assimilated to the Divine Vision.

4. It requires to be carefully noted, that there is a momentous difference between the inward shining of God in the heart, and the heart's own embracing of this perfect light. We may be all alike in regard to the one, but infinitely differing in regard to the other. As in the intellectual world the truths of the intellect are one and the same to all minds, but different minds receive them variously according to their capacities; as forms of beauty are the same to all eyes, but infinitely varying as to their impressions, according to the individual taste; even so the manifestation of God may be equally within the reach of all hearts, the same ideas, the same vision of love, may be present to all that believe; and yet there may be the utmost difference in the manner of receiving, in the effect produced, in the feeling excited, in the consequences to the soul's life. We may describe to another what our eyes behold; we cannot make another feel the effects which the sight produces in us. The manifestation is common to all, the feelings and response to it are peculiar to the individual soul. Our distinctiveness one from another rests not on the manifestation, the vision which is common alike to oneself and others, but on one's own heart's response to it. This is peculiar to oneself. The shining of the light of God upon the soul, marks what God is to oneself, not what oneself is to God. The embrace, the love, the cleaving of the soul's affections and desires, the realisation of S. Paul's witness of himself, "I was not disobedient to the

heavenly vision,"¹ the union of the loving, devoted, obedient being of one's own life with the love and living Presence of the Being of God,—this is our own; and forms the distinctive individuality of personal life in which the soul stands before God. It is not enough for oneself to say, "I have apprehended the mystery, I have meditated, I have seen the LORD. I live in the continual recollection of this transcendent vision." This may imply no more than an influence external to oneself, what is the common property of all that believe. Our real state is determined only by the momentous question, "How have I sympathised with the heavenly vision? Have I truly loved? Have I united myself with it in the silent movements of my heart? Is it the ground of my hopes and fears, of my restful love and joy?"

5. Again, we here see the basis on which a true human fellowship is formed. Our feelings towards our fellow-creatures are true, if we view them in the light which the Incarnation has shed on our redeemed nature. As this momentous change affecting our nature, has given to oneself a sense of supernatural dignity, notwithstanding the sinfulness and manifold infirmities with which we are still encompassed; so the same amazing mystery ought to raise to a higher order of spiritual union the love we bear to those naturally near and dear to us, and also inspire respect and loving care for man, as man, the fellow-creature of the Incarnate God, whatever physical form he may wear, or whatever may be his social rank and natural infirmity.

¹ Acts xxvi. 19.

We have an instinctive consciousness that the mutual love and care of the angels must grow out of an inner communion that lives in a pervading sense of the Presence of God within them, and of their common existence in Him. We can form no conception of the life of pure spirits living in harmony in the immediate Presence of God, except it be sustained by a continual fellowship of oneness of life in Him. This heavenly angelic fellowship is a true type of the mind which man should tend more and more to cherish towards his fellow-man, as he rises above the order of nature in his estimate of the unspeakable greatness of humanity in CHRIST. A consciousness of union and mutual dependence in CHRIST, which forms the foundation of spiritual fellowship, grows out of this supernatural source, independently of natural ties or dispositions. Such fellowship can exist toward strangers. It can embrace persons of all ranks and orders. It may overcome individual dislikes, or prejudices. It may create new ties, even as it imparts a sacredness to the sweet bonds of a like mind, or of natural relationship. Natural love when combined with this new bond of union in God, becomes the deepest rest and satisfaction of the heart's longings towards the creature; and spiritual ties may become as close, as tender, as full of sympathy, of rest and trustful communion, as the fondest ties of nature, through the unction of the Holy One uniting heart with heart in the circle of the Divine love which is shed abroad upon the creature in his transformation in CHRIST. In this communion the heart may live in blissful love of God and of man for God's sake, embracing every sphere of being in the one earnest

unselfish love wherewith itself has been loved of God.

O Light of the living God, shine inwardly, and reveal Thyself within me more and more in brightness and in power. For Thou must be to me not only the outward Vision to be beheld by my spiritual consciousness, but also the transforming grace kindling my soul, and imparting to it this capacity, this power of sight. Thou, Who art "the Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,"¹ art the same that giveth "power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."² And to become indeed "the sons of God," is to receive the very light and glory from the Face of the Only-Begotten, transforming the soul into His own Sonship, through sharing His inward life. We are sons, if the Image of the Son is reflected in our heart. We receive Him in this transforming power of life, as His grace penetrates, softening our hearts to imbibe His impressions, and moulding them into His forms of sanctity and truth. Shine thus in me, O Light of the Face of God, that even my darkness may comprehend Thee; and anoint mine eyes that I may see, and seeing live for evermore in the consciousness of the transforming vision, and seeing Thee truly, may see all things in Thee; for "in Thy Light shall we see light."³

The voice of the Prophet cries continually to our inmost heart, for the promised glory has been ful-

¹ S. John i. 9. ² S. John i. 12, 13. ³ Ps. xxxvi. 9.

filled before our eyes, and we have entered into its brightness. As the glory is ours, the energy of life in which it manifests itself, should be also ours. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. . . . The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall the moon withdraw itself, for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."¹

¹ Isa. lx. 1, 2, 19, 20.

SERMON XXIII.

THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE OF THE NEW COVENANT.

COL. II. 17.

“THE BODY IS OF CHRIST.”

THE term, “body,” in the text is used in contrast with “shadow,” and implies the substantial verity of spiritual things, which had once been only fore-shewn by outward signs. S. Paul is speaking of certain ordinances of the Mosaic Law, the “holy day,” the “new moon,” the “Sabbath-days,” which he selects as instances of the entire system of Jewish ordinances, and describes them as “a shadow of things to come.” He then contrasts with these under the term, “body,” the system of Christian ordinances which superseded them; “but the body is of CHRIST.”¹

¹ “The *σῶμα* is *substantial verity*, as opposed to *shadow*; as *σωματικῶς* in ver. 9. The *shadows* of the future things (Heb. x. 1) belonged to Moses and the Law, and to the Jews, but the *substance* of them belongs to CHRIST and to the Gospel; and as ye, who have been baptised into CHRIST, have passed from the shadow to the substance, from the letter to the spirit: therefore if ye return to them, ye renounce the substance for the shadow, and ye forfeit the spirit for the letter. Cf. Theophylact and Augustine, (Epis. 149,) and Jerome, (ad Alges. qu. 10.)”—Wordsworth in loc.

S. Paul uses the term, "image," in the same relation to "shadow" in his Epistle to the Hebrews, where again he contrasts the ordinances of the Old with those of the New Covenant. "The Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offer year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect."¹ The term, "image," in S. Paul's use, implies an outward form instinct with an inner life, which it includes and embodies. In this sense he employs the term, when describing the reunion of soul and body in their glorified state, as a real co-existence of the two elements of being equally substantial in our future glory as in our present humiliation. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the Image of the Heavenly."² In both cases alike, the earthy or the heavenly, the term, "image," means a body of life, a material frame, organically united with the inner spirit, and distinct from shadow or a mere outward form.

The term "Body," therefore, or "Image," when thus applied to the ordinances of the Gospel, involves the momentous truth, that the time of mere symbols had passed away, and that the substance or verity of eternal things had come. This the Law had not. It possessed outward consecrated forms; but they only symbolised, they did not embody life. On this account these ordinances "waxed old."³ Had they contained life, they could not have "waxed old;" they would have retained the power of perpetual revival. But they were ordained only for a temporary end, only to fore-

¹ Heb. x. 1.² 1 Cor. xv. 49.³ Heb. viii. 13.

shadow what should be hereafter, feeding and embodying the hopes of generations which must pass in comparative darkness and feebleness, before the Truth could manifest Himself; but their work done when He appeared, then of necessity they vanished away. They gave way, not before other shadows, but before the living Presence of their invisible Antitypes, before the Forms in which the Life willed to enshrine Itself, before the "Image" or "Body," which *can* "make the comers thereunto perfect."

The language of Holy Scripture distinguishes the several degrees of the manifestation of eternal and invisible things. They were ordained to advance in order, the one preparing the way for the other. There are three stages, or degrees, of the Divine manifestations. One is past, one is still present, one is yet to come. That which is past was the dispensation of types, shadows, resemblances of the things in the Heavens showed to Moses in the Mount, "the good things to come." That which is now present, is the outward visible form veiling the actual living Presence of those promised good things, which have come, and which by grace are so associated with the outward part in which they abide, that to receive the one is to receive the other. The outward part alone, indeed, is perceptible by the natural sense; but the inward Presence, Which is as substantial and as true, as the outward, is the very radiance which made the face of Moses to shine, so that "the people of Israel could not steadfastly behold him" for the glory of his countenance, though he bore but the reflection of the hidden light.¹ The third, that which re-

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 7.

mains, which is yet to come, is the open vision of the Life Which we now look upon and handle, only under a veil. The first was an outward form only. The second is the very Substance, the "grace and truth," though hidden. The Third is the same Substance unveiled, and in Its Fulness. Or to use the language of the SPIRIT speaking in S. Paul, the first was "shadow;" the second, "the Body of CHRIST;" the third, the very "knowing, even as also we are known,"¹ or, as S. John expresses the same perfect end, the seeing "Him as He is."² The first was an object of faith, as to what was to be hereafter. The second is the very means of receiving the promised grace therein present. The third is the visible Manifestation of GOD in the "glory that fadeth not away." The difference between the "shadow" and the "image" or "Body," is marked by this, that the "shadow" wholly vanishes, to be replaced by the living Truth, Which it dimly foreshewed; the "Body," or "image," does not vanish away, except in part; its inner part, its hidden Life, remains the same for ever, breaking forth into perfect Light, as the outward veil is withdrawn.

The difference that exists in the outward forms of the Old and the New Covenants, is an argument in favour of some momentous difference as to their inward virtue. The simplicity of the forms of the New Covenant contrasts strikingly with the grandeur and mystery of the ancient forms or ordinances, and itself suggests the idea that they contain more than meets the eye. It would have been inconsistent with the analogy of the Divine operations, there

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 12.

² 1 S. John ii. 2.

would have been no progress in the order of the Divine mysteries, if the magnificent signs from heaven which invested the ancient law with such impressive awfulness had given way merely for the bringing in of the simple rites which characterize the New Testament Dispensation. To suppose that at an advanced stage of GOD'S purposes we should be using forms with less of miracle, less of grandeur, than those which were given to the less favoured people of old, seems contrary to a natural order. The manna falling every morning from heaven ; the water from the stricken rock ; and, continued through still later ages, the veil of mystery before the Holy of Holies, the voices from the shrine, the shining of the sacred breastplate, and, among even the most ordinary instruments of service, the typical garments, and vessels of the sanctuary, formed after patterns given by special revelation,—these, in dignity of outward form, far exceed the ordinances instituted for Christian use. If the water of the font, the laying on of hands, the bread and wine, are bare signs, we should have greatly lost in comparison with the Jews. Ours, not theirs, would be “the beggarly elements.” Our advance, our gain must be, that these simpler signs are quickened, exalted, glorified by the Realities which they image forth to the eye of faith. As the former were the forecast shadows of CHRIST Who was to come, the latter must be the very embodiment of His Presence, the organs of His glory, the earthly vestments of His sacred Person.

It is a law of the Gospel, that, in working out its designs, the simplest forms of visible things are chosen, for the very purpose of removing the obstacle to faith in the inward, which a grander

outward manifestation would present. The quickened spirit, unable to rest in so bare and feeble an external, must needs pass beyond the visible sign, from the very fact of its insignificance. It cannot be that what is seen, and touched, so unimpressive, and so poor, is all that comes to us, and enters into us. S. Paul declares this law of grace, when, speaking of his own supernatural gifts of Apostleship, he says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."¹ And, again, he shows how this same principle extends to all the Divine operations of the New Covenant. "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." And the reason given is, "that no flesh should glory in His Presence."² And the same law applies to the choice of the earthly, the visible, parts of the most mysterious communications of His grace. The glory of His Presence is to be magnified by the weakness of the vessel which contains It. The ancient forms were clothed with outward majesty, because their outward form was their only greatness. The forms of the New Covenant are composed of the feeblest elements, with no beauty or awfulness of their own, because their true greatness is to be sought in what is not their own, but Another's, in the Unseen, the Impalpable, the Heavenly, which is their true and only Life.

Moreover, the very principles of the New Cove-

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

² 1 Cor. i. 27, 29.

nant involve the cessation of the system of mere external forms. The Incarnation of GOD caused an entire change in the nature of religious ordinances. It was not merely the completion of the prophetic types of the Law, fulfilling all their indications. It was also the beginning and the cause of a different order of mysteries. The system of sacraments, i. e., of visible forms having an invisible virtue, commenced with the completion of the union of the Divine and human in One Person. The Godhead had entered into the creature, and now for ever wears his form, as the clothing and organ of a new Presence. And this transcendent mystery was with the view of extending the virtues of His life, multiplying His Presence, and imparting His Nature, as the renewing principle of restored humanity. The communication of the Divine Presence and virtue into other creature-forms is the result of the extension of the Incarnation. The necessity for mere shadows ceased, when the union with the creature commenced. Then at once the Divine love, the yearning to reach us, to communicate Himself to us, impressed itself on everything which was ordained, caused every form which He assumed, to be an embodiment of some great living reality, Himself, or His Spirit, or some outflowing of Himself, some portion of the Body of CHRIST. As the Divinity concealed Itself beneath the Form of the Humanity of JESUS, even so now His Divinity and Humanity for ever indissolubly united, though not after the same mode of union, yet with a real Presence, conceal themselves under various visible forms, through which to abide with us, through which to act upon us. This is the ground and

principle of sacraments. There is, indeed, no hypostatic union between GOD and the forms of sacraments, as there is between the Divinity and the Humanity of the Blessed JESUS; but there is an assumption by Himself of the sacramental forms according to laws of His grace, in order that He may now unite Himself with us through organs palpable to our sense and akin to the present natural order of earthly existences.

Sacraments vary as to their promised gifts of grace, and their fulness. Some contain CHRIST in all the virtues of His Passion and Ascension, and are therefore simply and absolutely necessary for all persons in order to life. Others of less perfect sacramental efficacy, convey special portions of His grace needful for special purposes of spiritual life. On this principle depends the distinction between the greater and the lesser sacraments, or between sacraments strictly so called, and sacramental rites.

But this great truth of the union of the incarnate GOD with the forms of creature-life is not limited to sacraments and sacramental rites. It has a far wider range. The whole world of GOD's elect people is in a true sense the Body of CHRIST, "the fulness," or complement, "of Him That filleth all in all,"¹ inasmuch as we are "partakers of the Divine Nature."² Our very personal life thus becomes sacramental. In our LORD the Divine and human natures form One Person. We are not indeed one person with Him, but we are mystically united with Him, so that we are, by some daily miracle of grace, outward forms of the inner life of our LORD. The

¹ Eph. i. 15.

² 2 S. Pet. i. 4.

poor shadow of our natural humanity is no more; it has been transfigured by the infusion of a new spiritual creation, it has become the visible form of a new substance, the external organ of supernatural life flowing from an indwelling Presence of God. The same law extends, though after a different mystery, to our outward states and vocations in the kingdom of grace. This principle, e. g., reconciles the varied expression of the first beatitude. The "Blessed are the poor in spirit" of S. Matthew,¹ and the "Blessed be ye poor," of S. Luke,² were the utterances of the same Voice conveying to us different sides of the one truth. He chose literal outward poverty to be the manifestation of His inward poverty, and thus sealed the external effects of the poor man's lot to be the sacramental symbol of an inherent lowliness. They are one in the language of heaven, because they were made one in CHRIST. A uniform scriptural use has consecrated the simple term, "poor," to be equally expressive of both. They are assumed according to the living laws of grace to be indissolubly combined.

This same principle is the true solution of the question which of late years has perplexed many with regard to marriage. Viewed naturally, marriage is but a social contract, terminable, it may be, if its vital conditions are unfulfilled, or broken. Viewed in CHRIST, sealed by grace within His Body, the Church, it is, as the Holy Scriptures affirm,³ a mystery, "signifying unto us the mystical union which is betwixt CHRIST and His Church." If the thing signified, the union betwixt CHRIST and His Church, be indissoluble, and if for individual

¹ S. Matt. v. 3.

² S. Luke vi. 20.

³ Eph. v. 32.

members within the elect Body, there is always a return open after the most grievous breach of most sacred promises, a reconciliation for one gone astray, a sure restoration of forfeited and rejected love in the bosom of GOD, must not also the visible sign of such a union be indissoluble?

And herein again lies the secret power which the Saints have ever exercised within the Church. The more distinguished Saints of Christendom are the supports and guides of their generation. And why is this, but because they are felt to be special manifestations of an indwelling Presence of the LORD? GOD is felt in them coming nearer to us, speaking to us in their voice, and shining upon us in the features of their countenance. Their illumination is the light of the Church. Their quietness and love is the cheering of troubled days. Their good works are the perpetuation of His Presence, Who "went about doing good." Their lives are the reflection of the life of our LORD on earth. This is true in the case of all His Elect, according to the measure of their likeness to Him. But there are some who stand out in their generation, as the brighter stars in our sky when its sun is hidden. It is not trusting in man, when, in dependence upon GOD, we trust in them. We are trusting an organ through which GOD reveals Himself. Even as absolutions and benedictions pass through the voices of men, because of the grace of Priesthood, even so wisdom comes through the guidance of men, because of the grace of sanctity. We are in each case trusting our LORD. The guidance vouchsafed to His Church through the teaching of His saints, is only one part of that same mystery of GOD's manifest-

ing Himself through created forms. The Inspiration from which Holy Scripture emanated was a distinct gift limited to a certain age, and known by long established laws. But there is an inspiration of saintly wisdom which is the gift of all ages, perpetually issuing forth from God, dwelling with special grace in His chosen ones, sealed by holy examples and the meekness of wisdom which is from above.

This same principle, moreover, has a momentous practical bearing on our lives. One cause of our sin, and still more of our spiritual feebleness, is the low view too commonly taken of our being, our vocations, our ordained outward circumstances. When we are slothful, or the prey of fears; when we yield to unholy seductions, enslaved by appetites, soiled by sensuality; or remain passive under thoughts of evil; or give way too far to mere secondary motives,—if we examine ourselves aright, we find most frequently that these are but the proximate causes of sin. There are inner depths of evil lying beneath, and giving occasion to the faults which appear more openly on the surface. Generally it will be found that the real cause of this marred or imperfect life, is a secret unbelief of the powers of holiness, or a forgetfulness of God's Presence in us; a want of appreciating the mystery of our renewal in CHRIST. How constantly is it observed, that loss of faith in the promise of the true sanctification of man in this life, has deteriorated the moral condition of multitudes. Let a man suppose that the utmost blessedness he can attain, is an external imputation of CHRIST's righteousness, that justification by faith does not neces-

sarily imply an inherent holiness of his own,—and he has impaired his hope of any great attainment in sanctity. He has less power in the conquest of sin, less capacity for spiritual efforts.

The same defect extends yet further. We may believe in the necessity of an inherent sanctity, and yet doubt the possibility of attaining it in our own case, lacking faith in the full power of CHRIST within our souls, and failing to sustain the efforts which we have begun to make. The life of such persons is an habitual wavering between deep convictions and self-reproach, a record of hopeless prayers and repeated confessions of ever renewed faults. One remedy for such weakness is to endeavour to realise the actual mystery of our being and our vocation in GOD. In common life, the mere fact of being raised into a higher position, produces a change of life from the very consciousness of the necessity of keeping up the proprieties which the rules of society demand. The mere apprehension of what our situation requires, is itself a sustaining power. Thus, again, the realisation of any great idea acts powerfully on the mind. A new world opens before us, fresh powers are felt stirring within, our whole being is expanded, elevated, quickened to a higher sense and energy, by the mere force of the greatness presented to the mind. A similar law prevails in our spiritual nature. Let the idea of a sacramental life, of being oneself the very substance of a mystery, as well as moving among mysteries, of a personal union with CHRIST and acting as His organ, of one's vocation being an impress of His own state; that the time of shadows is really passed, and all is instinct with great reali-

ties stretching into the Infinite; that oneself is a centre, a world, around which all these movements are rapidly fulfilling their end; that through CHRIST thus mystically associated with us, we may become as He is, the very Image of His character, the spiritual beauty of His Form,—if these convictions possess the soul, what a changed scene arises before us; what a new world of feeling, thought, imagination, springs up around our feet; what a different standard of life at once is formed; in what an aggravated shape does sin appear; what strength is felt in resisting it; what mourning before GOD when we fail; what reverence, what watchfulness in our communion with outward things, in our intercourse with one another, as seeing CHRIST in all; what dutiful care, especially in holy things! We are sustained while the idea is in our minds. While we thus think, we strive to act up to the greatness of our conceptions. But this ought to be our constant state. GOD requires of us some corresponding conception of His marvellous revelations. The fulness of His grace waits for a fulness in the apprehensions of the soul. A mystery that is unperceived loses its influence. This law falls under the great central truth, “according to your faith be it unto you.”

The sum of all is this; GOD has entered into human life as a new sphere of His Being. He has taken created forms as organs of His manifestations. He has done so in order that He may transform us into His own Image, and shed the mystery of His own Divine nature on all our state. What need we on our part? We need faith in

these operations of GOD. We need to rise by the apprehension of faith to meet the condescension of GOD. We need a correspondence of our will with His will, of our thoughts with His thoughts, of our desires with His, a tenderness and a pliancy of mind and heart, that we may be meet to receive whatever His mercy wills to create in us. It is untrue to regard ourselves as ourselves, dwelling on our individual existence, fixing our minds on the thought, that what we have within us, is our own. Rather we are to regard ourselves simply as organs of the life which GOD infuses into us, which we share with others, which He gives and increases for His own ends and purposes, not ours. Live as fulfilling these ends, and doing GOD's work as He wills it to be done, that He, and He alone, may be glorified. Let Him do His good work within thee, that in thee He may have free course, revealing Himself in ever fresh manifestations of His grace.

O Thou "Who workest in us to will and to do of Thy good pleasure," incline my will to co-operate evermore with Thine. "We wait for Thy loving-kindness, O LORD, in the midst of Thy temple." "LORD, Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us."¹ And He will surely sustain thee, if thou trustest in Him, even though it be in uttermost weakness; "for even the youths shall faint, and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail; but they that wait on the LORD shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."²

¹ Isa. xxvi. 12.

² Isa. xl. 30, 31.

SERMON XXIV.

THE APOSTOLIC WITNESS TO THE LIFE IN CHRIST.

GAL. II. 20.

“THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH, I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME, AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.”

THESE words express a personal experience, the truth of which was tested before the world during many years of manifold trial. There is no man whose writings and actions, whose inward principles and manner of conversation, have been more publicly known both in his own day and in all after ages, than S. Paul. Such words therefore as these, which reveal the groundwork and strength of his inward life, are beyond measure momentous and interesting in their bearing on the possible endowments of redeemed humanity. S. Paul's natural characteristics remained unchanged after his conversion. His training in the schools, and learned education; his appreciation of his high Jewish birth, and privileges as a Roman citizen; his lofty moral courage; his generous self-devotion; his warm friendship; his refined courtesy; his powers

of endurance; his intense zeal for what he believed to be right; his stern and scrupulous morality—all these characteristics marked him alike in his converted or unconverted state. They were the distinguishing features of the human side of S. Paul's character, and they were as strongly marked in him after he had seen the LORD JESUS, as before that eventful change.

The words of the text, however, describe a life soaring far above these natural virtues; an unearthly spirit working through, but beyond them. S. Paul writes as one conscious of the amazing change which had passed within him. "The life I now live in the flesh," *now*, as distinguished from what had been. The description of this new life has no appearance of a mere ideal. The words give no indication of a rapture, such as a dreamy ascetic might picture to himself. S. Paul's was a strong practical character, inconsistent with such an explanation. His words are instinct with reality. They are earnest practical words. "The *life* I now *live* in the flesh." S. Paul was of necessity contemplative from the very greatness of his mental capacities, and the vast conceptions with which he was illuminated; but he above all men lived in action and in suffering, in the eye and ear of the world. He was naturally constituted to take a leading part in the struggle of life. None of the Apostles has left a deeper impression on our race, not of his own time only, but of all future times; and this in some degree from the very force of his natural character, independently of his grace of Apostleship and his inspiration. But his words imply that he had passed out of himself and be-

yond himself, into another's life; that while retaining his natural practical energy, he had imbibed a new animating principle, which had transformed him. He was no longer his own centre; no longer his own spring of action. He was no longer his own self. Self had died. He lived in and for Another. His end, his aim, his desire no longer centred in his own consciousness, but in the SON of GOD.

It was by faith that S. Paul had stretched forth to attain this higher life. "The life I now live, I live by *faith* in the SON of GOD." Faith is commonly represented as the hand of the soul. Rather it is the impulse and acting of the soul itself stretching itself, as a hand grasps an object. The soul not only sees Him Who is invisible, but seeing grasps, lays hold of Him Whom inwardly it sees. This seeing and stretching forth, this grasping and laying hold, is faith. It is not a part or faculty of the soul. Nor is faith an act of the soul, as distinct from the soul. It is the soul itself in desire, in intense aim, in act. The soul conscious of its own nothingness, conscious of its need of leaning on another, goes forth towards an object presented to it, in which, for which to live. This is faith, and the bringing every thought into obedience to this high object, this is the life of faith.

I. S. Paul's words imply two chief elements of this new life, which thus by faith he lived in the SON of GOD.

1. One of these two points is love; for it was our LORD's love towards him that he here dwells upon. "I live by faith in the SON of GOD, *Who loved me.*"

He had embraced the love of CHRIST towards himself, and love in his own soul towards his LORD was the result.

It is to be observed, that our LORD's individualizing love is what he speaks of. "The SON of GOD, Who loved *me*." This individuality gives intensity to love, causing it to be a personal, as distinguished from a mere general love. The sight he had of our LORD Who appeared to him by the way as he went to Damascus, must have enabled him to understand this individualizing love of CHRIST. It was a special coming forth for him, as for one alone. He had perceived the Divine Love as fastened on himself; and it is this sense of a special personal love fastening on oneself, that awakens one's own love in return. The sense of another's whole self centring on oneself, tends by a necessary law of our nature to awaken a responsive love.

From that hour love became one predominant energy of S. Paul's inner life. It is remarkable that although S. John is distinguished as the Apostle of love, and love is the key-note of his Epistles, and the word is ever recurring in them, and we are accustomed to regard this grace of love in its calm inner depths, as something peculiar to S. John—yet S. Paul gives the fullest and most touching description of love in all the Scriptures. "Charity suffereth long and is kind, charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things,

endureth all things.”¹ This is not S. John’s description, but S. Paul’s. Bearing the impress of his character, ever intense in action, his description of love is intensely practical. In language rising beyond that of every other inspired writer of the New Testament, he expresses the practical self-sacrifice of love. “If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”² “Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews ; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law ; to them that are without law, as without law, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the Gospel’s sake.”³ Again, “I say the truth in CHRIST, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the HOLY GHOST, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from CHRIST for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”⁴

S. John’s description of the self-sacrifice of love, “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,”⁵ implies the very same truths ; but S. Paul’s is the fuller. Both S. John and S. Paul attribute to love the same results, yet they were very different in

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 4.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 19.

⁵ 1 S. John iii. 16.

² 1 Cor. viii. 13.

⁴ Rom. ix. 1.

their natural disposition, in their mission in the Church, in the training of their early life. But the character of love in both is the same; and the cause of this sameness is clear. They had both embraced CHRIST and His love, as a pattern for their own, and by His grace they were alike transformed into the same image, and they spoke, as they had been taught, by the same SPIRIT. Both alike had received the same spring of life into their souls, and were both living “by faith in the SON of GOD, Who loved” them both with a perfect love.

2. The second element of life on which S. Paul dwells in the text, is the consciousness of mercy in being redeemed. This consciousness is intimately connected with love; but yet they are to be distinguished. “The SON of GOD Who *gave Himself for me*,”—this conviction embraced in his soul, was the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins. If He gave Himself for me, I cannot perish. Bought at a price so precious, I cannot but be His own. If the bargain be indeed such, He for me, His Blood for my blood, I cannot but be His, and therefore safe in His love. S. Paul’s words assume the fact of the Atonement in the sense of a substitution of another sacrificed and accepted for himself. “*For me*,” can only mean instead of me; the one suffering, dying in the place of the other. If S. Paul had viewed our LORD’S sacrifice merely as an example of high moral devotion, a stupendous expression of self-forgetting love, then these latter words of the text add nothing to the words preceding them. They would in such case be pleonastic. They would contribute nothing to the previous

statement. But the two ideas are manifestly distinct. "Who loved me," is one idea. "Who gave Himself for me," is as clearly another idea. The two ideas are at once distinguishable. The giving Himself for me, expresses S. Paul's debt to his LORD beyond His love. He might have loved him, and yet not have given Himself as an atoning Sacrifice for his sin, a Substitute on Whom "was laid the iniquity of us all."¹

The conviction expressed in these words became to S. Paul a life-giving reality, the spring of fervent affections, of unspeakable rest and unceasing energy. S. Paul speaks of its effects in his Epistle to the Romans: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with GOD through our LORD JESUS CHRIST; by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of GOD; and not only so, but we glory in tribulation also."² Again: "GOD commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us. Much more, then, being justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to GOD by the death of His SON, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His Life."³ And these convictions, lasting through life, formed the groundwork of an abiding thankfulness and trust, leavening all his inward thoughts. In one of his later Epistles, written thirty years after his conversion, he recalls the mercy of his deliverance as a signal encouragement to the world. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first JESUS CHRIST should

¹ Isa. liii. 6.

² Rom. v. 1.

³ Rom. v. 8.

show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to everlasting life.”¹ This mention of his conversion after so many years, proves that S. Paul’s sense of personal forgiveness and acceptance with God, as a redeemed man, bought at a great price, was a lifelong consciousness, a perpetually acting force within him, an ever freshly-gushing tide of power within his soul. As S. Paul resembles S. John in the sameness of their love, so in this feature of his renewed life he resembles S. Peter. There was in both Apostles a constant vivid consciousness of their forgiveness, the absorbing gratitude for the blotting out of very grievous sins. They live together in the Church’s annals as the Apostles of repentance, magnifying the grace manifested in their conversion, the power of their love rendered more intense by the sense of personal obligation for more than ordinary mercy in their deliverance from the bondage of sin.

II. The text moreover touches on one of the deep practical questions of Christianity, namely, whether its aim be to make CHRIST and His Example the standard and guide of our life, or to establish us in the freedom and power of an illuminated reason, which supersedes the necessity of an appeal to our LORD’S life as a standard. It is urged that although our LORD gave His example as a law of life, yet this applied only to the earlier stage of the history of restored humanity; that this dispensation has long passed away, and that the law of the Spirit has superseded the law of the life of

¹ 1 Tim. i. 16.

CHRIST, restored mankind being now left to the free development of their spiritual nature, as in the history of the natural man youth is influenced by the force of example, but matured age is left to guide itself by the independent gift of reason.

Now the words of S. Paul are manifestly inconsistent with this view. They prove, on the contrary, that CHRIST was to him the living mould and pattern of his life in its most advanced stage. He describes his life as resting not on a doctrine, nor on any law within himself, similar to the inward power of the adult man; but on faith in a Person external to himself, though indwelling within him, faith in the SON of GOD, Who had become One with him, as an inner life within his transformed humanity. This interpretation becomes the more certain, when the words are taken in connection with those immediately preceding them: "I live, yet not I, but CHRIST liveth in me." He lived on the pattern and example of another's life, not on any renewed or advanced standard of his own. He represents his soul as looking through and beyond its own powers, beyond its own illuminated reason, to rest on Him Who embodied a perfect Humanity in a supernatural sanctity in union with the Godhead. The mind of CHRIST had laid its spell on the spirit of the redeemed man, and therefore he lived. He lived to be a reproduction and representative of what he beheld and believed. He fed on the living CHRIST. Contemplating the light of the SON of GOD manifest in the flesh, he became himself light, kindled by the contemplation of the face of GOD in CHRIST: and therefore, when turning to the earth,

he must needs reflect the same light. The life-giving virtue of the life of CHRIST was infused into his own being, so that in him was fulfilled that transformation of nature of which he speaks, as the blessed practical result of the Incarnation of the SON of GOD in all those who rightly receive Him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in CHRIST JESUS, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS hath made me free 'from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own SON in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.'"

It cannot be supposed, that we are raised above Apostles; that we possess a strength and spiritual stature, which enable us to live more alone; that we less need the stay and guidance of an external example. If it be possible to maintain such a theory in the time of our strength, it will fail us in the hour of temptation. It will give way before the realities of sorrow and trial, the experience of the "weary and heavy laden." Who when struggling against some besetting sin, can find such sure aid as one who turns to the example of CHRIST, "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin?"² Who that is sad of heart, or under some sore bereavement, could fail to draw increased strength from recalling the meek endurance of his LORD, when "all the disciples forsook Him and fled," when left alone in the judgment-hall? Who

¹ Rom. viii. 1.

² Heb. iv. 15.

that studies our LORD's life, His sanctity, His purity, His gentleness, His reverence, His humility, His love, but feels at every fresh contemplation his own nature elevated, his humanity impressed with some increase of spiritual greatness through a growing likeness to His perfect example, while yet the ultimate standard of the possible perfection of his nature rises before him to a greater height in proportion as he knows his LORD more perfectly. Those who are most matured and advanced in their spiritual life still find the need of the life of CHRIST, as an end and aim, as the stay and mould of their growing sanctity, equally in their later as in their earlier years.

III. Again, we here see one reason of the difference between the righteous of the old and those of the new Covenant, a difference manifest to every one who reads even cursorily the Book of God. There were no doubt in some of the more distinguished saints of the Old Testament anticipations of the coming glory of the new supernatural creation, men lifted up on higher eminences than their fellows, who saw before the time the light of the Son of Man then below the horizon, and living in that light were enabled to shed on the world around them the reflection of that light which they had received before the appointed time. But even those nobler sons of the Old Covenant were uncertain and irregular in their spiritual greatness. Even an Abraham was not free from untruth. Moses by impatience forfeited his entrance into the Holy Land. We instinctively feel the difference of the standard prevailing in the two cases. We

should be startled, e.g., to find the failing faith of the fugitive Elijah in an Apostle, or a fall like David's in a Prophet of the New Israel, or to read the history of the Man of God who came from Judah, in the Acts of the Holy Apostles. There is in the great of the New Testament a completeness, a consistency, a steadfastness, a maturity of formed character which marks a different era. There are often greatnesses of supernatural holiness in the saints of the Old, like to those of the New Covenant; but they are either separately or less perfectly developed. They want the finish and perfectness of the master hand. There are inconsistencies and breaks in their life, which we should feel at once if we were to transpose the one to the place of the other.

The hereditary language of the Church has stamped the difference which our reason acknowledges. We apply the term, saint, properly only to the great of the New Covenant. The Old Testament possessed its types of holiness and righteousness, but the saint, strictly so-called, is the creation of the Gospel, the product of the Incarnation. The term implies a supernatural life, sustained in union with CHRIST through the Spirit indwelling in the soul and assimilating the inner nature of the redeemed man to the nature of his LORD. His LORD's life lifts up his life, raising it above the utmost height possible through the most earnest endeavours without Him, as its Type and indwelling Soul. And this law of life is as necessary now in this advanced age of the world, as it was then in the beginning of the latter days. We do not need CHRIST less. The Spirit of CHRIST is ours,

but in order that He may "take of the things of CHRIST, and show them unto us."¹

IV. This same truth explains what would otherwise be a mere extravagance in the portraiture which S. Paul draws of his own and his brethren's daily state. When e.g., he says; "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses for CHRIST's sake;"² "as unknown and yet well known, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as dying and behold we live, as chastened yet not killed, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things;"³ or again, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through CHRIST strengthening me;"⁴—such a life is not a high moral creation, or the development of an advanced reason. Poverty and loneliness, hardness and humiliation, voluntarily chosen; the loss of all things, the mortified life, felt to be an inward joy,—these are phenomena for which no rational solution can be given. We cannot conceive any development of human virtues, forming into such conditions. But if we understand that these men had before their eyes the life of CHRIST, as the great spiritual reality in which they believed; that it was always present to their consciousness; CHRIST and Him crucified their only knowledge; that all other knowledge was to them vain and

¹ S. John xvi. 14.

² 2 Cor. xii. 10.

³ 2 Cor. vi. 9.

⁴ Phil. iv. 12.

perishing; that they looked perpetually at this as the only true perfection of Humanity in union with God,—then we may recognize the cause of such manifestations of character, however we fail to realize them in ourselves. The practical life of the Acts and Epistles of the holy Apostles would be an extravagance, an unreality, but for the assurance which accompanies them, that the living type of self-sacrifice, of love and sanctity, represented in our LORD's life in the Gospels, had power to draw men into itself; that a new creation of life of a supernatural order arose for redeemed men out of the depths of the twofold personality of the Divine and human natures in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.

V. There are conditions of mind which must co-operate with the grace of GOD, in order to attain any measure of such likeness to our LORD. Two such conditions may be gathered from S. Paul's personal history. (1.) There must be, first, a yielded will. The commencement of S. Paul's spiritual career was a surrender of his will to GOD. His words, "LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?"¹ were coincident with the commencement of the stupendous change which he underwent. "They led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus;"² the incident was a token of the continued guidance, which ever afterwards he sought and obtained from GOD. Our perverted will is the great antagonist to the life of GOD in our souls. Even when our will is not directly rebellious, so as to tend to positive acts of sin known and acknowledged, yet the want of an entire surrender of our

¹ Acts ix. 6.² Acts ix. 8.

will to the will of GOD is the true cause of the desires after things forbidden, the reluctances to bear appointed trials, the self-seekings, the murmurings, the constant disquietudes, the frettings, the unhappy tempers, which form the staple of the short day of so many lives. Let the will be changed, and all is changed. Let there be no will of our own, and the groundwork of all this evil is removed. If—"I have ceased to wish, my dreamings and my longings once so fondly cherished, are no more,"—be the true utterance of the soul, then, and not till then has it begun, however feebly and falteringly, to taste a true life in GOD, to pass into the sphere of the heavenly, of a growing union with CHRIST. Another will then takes the place of the renounced self, one to which all things must bow in heaven and in earth.

S. Paul's after life followed as a legitimate consequence of that one act of self-surrender. It took thenceforth the shape which GOD willed for it. The will of GOD assumes different shapes in different individual lives. There have been supernatural lives led in the council-chamber and in the study, in the mart and in the camp, in the cottage and in the hall, as well as in the cloister and at the altar; in childhood or in youth, equally as in manhood or in hoar hairs. It is irrespective of time or station, of age or outward circumstances. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of Him that showeth mercy."¹ The entire surrender of the will involves pain, and can be obtained only through secret struggles, in persevering prayer, and the sacrifice of what the heart clings to as its life, of that to which often our best years are given, late

awakening to perceive the delusion to which one had blindly surrendered his life. But grace is given according to our need. "He that will receive it, let him receive it." The Judgment of the world to come, will prove that they who have struggled and offered the sacrifice, have chosen wisely and well. They may not have to tarry long, for the decree has gone forth. The destined Day is nigh at hand, when "wisdom shall be justified of all her children," and God "shall reward every man according to his works."

2. One more condition may be mentioned in connection with S. Paul's history. There must also be the contrite sense of the sinfulness which is passed, with the rejoicing thankfulness that the precious Blood has touched it, and cleansed it away. This consciousness manifestly lay at the root of all S. Paul's earnestness. It was the deep thought first stirred within him, when he heard the words; "I am JESUS, Whom thou persecutest."¹ The same inward conviction, only in more full maturity of contrition, was expressed in one of his latest Epistles; "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."² S. Paul's life is the most remarkable instance of the blessed truth, that GOD brings good even out of evil; that He turns our errors, even our deadly sins, into instruments of spiritual energy, bearing the richest fruits of righteousness. It is not that they suffer no loss, who have turned out of the ways of sin into the ways of sanctity. The effects of sin upon the soul, as well as the consequences of its forgive-

¹ Acts ix. 5.

² 1 Tim. i. 15.

ness, are among the mysteries which we can but commit to the mercies of God. There may be forgiveness of the deadliest sins, and the renewal of a perfect life after they are renounced. But there is no revelation to determine the degrees or extent of such healing grace. Only we are assured, that there are no limits to its power. So neither can there be limits to the possibility of attaining its fulness, whatever the past may have been. Yet there may be spiritual loss remaining, we know not how long, as the divinely ordained penance for one who has gone astray. What would not S. Paul have given, had he been as S. John in his early life? He was always in his own eyes "the least of the Apostles, not worthy to be called an Apostle, because he persecuted the Church of God."¹ But yet, so great is the compassion of God and the largeness of grace, that the lively sense of past sin became in him the greatest possible stimulus to distinguished virtue. "What has not my LORD borne for me! What a debt do I not owe Him for the blotting out of my transgressions!" Lives of unceasing self-sacrifice, superhuman deeds of heroism, the meekest endurance of years of trial, have issued out of that single thought.

This loving, grateful sense of forgiveness obtained at such a cost, is the perpetual deepening of penitence, and the groundwork of perfect contrition. To grow in contemplation of the Passion which sin caused, is to attain a true view of the guilt of sin; and only as the sense of guilt increases, contrition deepens. Contrition does not necessarily advance with advancing years; but as

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 9.

advancing years bring deepening views of CHRIST'S love, and of the sufferings by which He bought us, the intenser consciousness of the heinousness of sin advances also. This same sense of thankfulness for sins forgiven imparts that peculiar tenderness and power of sympathy which, when united with a strong resolution and hardihood of spiritual energy, forms one of the finest developments of sanctity. Tenderness and gentle forbearance and meek humility, are the special outgrowths of a deepening sense of mercy in the blotting out of sin. They grow in us as contrition grows, and the true Christian is at once the strongest in mental energy, and the tenderest in humility; for he alone at once has the profoundest view of human weakness and unworthiness, and the most exalted apprehension of the powers of grace.

Strive, then, to live this life of GOD, which, although fed and sustained by unseen mysteries, is nevertheless the greatest practical reality, deeper and more enduring than the strong mountains. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away."¹ Such a life does not ignore or neglect the order of the world, but by a secret alchemy transforms it into a perpetual expression of the Divine will. It does not withdraw itself from any true human charity, but exalts every one into an exercise of Divine love. It is an unceasing activity, for there is the energy of a Divine power underlying all the human faculties; and it is a life that goeth about doing good, the life of CHRIST, the true GOD and the true Man. "My FATHER

¹ S. Matt. v. 18.

worketh hitherto, and I work.”¹ And yet such a life is the profoundest repose of which humanity is as yet capable; for what can disturb the inner calm of one who has learnt, as an habitual reality, to cast every care on God, Who careth for him, the calm as of one hushed to rest and laid in His everlasting Arms.

Let the attainment of this Divine life be the continual prayer and breathing of thy soul, the longing ever rising up before the altar, the desire that is ever present before God, the resolve by which thou art known in the kingdom of His grace. The only true life is the life which begins and ends in God. All things are of Thee, O God, and there is no true life out of Thee. “O LORD, our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us, but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy Name.” “The desire of our soul is to Thy Name, and to the remembrance of Thee.” “With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early.” “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth on Thee.”² “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory; for whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”³

¹ S. John v. 17.

² Isa. xxvi.

³ Ps. lxxiii. 23—25.

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Sermons.

TABLE OF THE PARABLES IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY WERE SPOKEN.

No.	Parable.	The Idea.	No. of Sermon.
1	The Sower	Religion grows "in good ground," prepared hearts;	14
2	Candle of the Gospel .	It demands the outward profession,	15
3	Seed Growing Secretly	And inward conviction of the moral agent. . .	16
4	Tares	Then it tells on society—forms a sacred so- ciety,	17
5	Mustard Seed	Which is to establish itself in the world, . .	18
6	Leaven	And penetrate its whole moral life:	19
7	Hidden Treasure	Yet it remains an individual treasure, . . .	20
8	Merchant and Pearl .	And occupies the whole existence of a man. .	21
9	Net of Fishes	The Society it forms contains bad and good, .	22
10	Forgiven Debtor . . .	And is, in fact, a sphere of probation; . . .	23
11	Sheepfold	But a strict one.	24
12	Two Debtors	The religious man begins in penitence and love;	25
13	Good Samaritan . . .	Proceeds in benevolence,	26
14	Urgent Neighbour . .	Is anxious for others as well as himself; . .	27
15	Rich Fool	Becomes more unworldly,	28
16	Unfruitful Fig-tree .	And more fruitful in good works;	29
17	Bidden Guests	He gains humility;	30
18	Great Supper	Heartily accepts the heavenly commands; . .	31
19	Builder and Soldier .	Chooses his course firmly, and endures to the end.	32
20	Lost Sheep	But he <i>was</i> fallen from God and sought out by Him	2
21	Piece of Silver	Who in mercy deemed his soul of value. . .	3
22	Prodigal	And restored him, as a lost child to a Father. .	4, 5, 6
23	Unjust Steward	Then let him not by unfaithfulness forfeit his privileges;	47
24	Rich Man and Beggar.	But remember, privilege is not salvation. . .	33
25	Importunate Widow .	Let him be "instant in prayer,"	34
26	Pharisee and Publican	And humble in worship:	35
27	Labourers	For probation ever proceeds on just laws. . .	36
28	Pounds	Equal privileges <i>ought</i> to be equally em- ployed;	37
29	Two Sons	Though persons of opposite tempers <i>may</i> use them perversely,	38
30	Vineyard	And sometimes men of all tempers <i>may</i> combine to <i>resist</i> goodness:	39
31	Wedding Garment . . .	Or, some solitary hypocrisy may be found, midst general regard to religion:	40
32	Virgins	Or, a general torpor may fall on men. . . .	41
33	Talents	Or, finally, privileges may be unequal: . . .	42
34	Budding Fig-tree . . .	But all things are <i>unsettled</i> as yet:	43
35	Oppressive Servant . .	Let not inequality tempt us to sin:	44
36	Absent Householder . .	The present is a time of suspense.	45
37	Last Judgment	The Judgment shall close all in righteous- ness.	46



Absolution: washing of the feet. 93-98.

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